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GOETHE
Conversations of German Refugees

In those unhappy days that brought such misfortune to Germany, to Europe, indeed to the whole world, when the Frankish army burst into our land through a breach in our defenses, a noble family abandoned their property in the region and fled across the Rhine in order to escape the afflictions threatening everyone of any distinction. Their only crime was that they remembered their ancestors with pleasure and respect, and that they enjoyed advantages which any well-meaning father would be happy to provide for his children and descendants.

The Baroness of C---, a middle-aged widow, comforted her children, relatives and friends as resolutely and energetically during their flight as she had at home. Raised in a cosmopolitan atmosphere and educated by a variety of experiences, she was known as a model of domesticity, and her intelligence welcomed challenges of every kind. She wanted to help others: a wide circle of acquaintances enabled her to do so. Now, she was suddenly called upon to lead a little cavalcade, and she was able to guide them, look after them, and maintain good humor in their circle even amidst fear and distress. And indeed our refugees were often cheerful enough, for surprises and unfamiliar circumstances provided their overwrought spirits with ample material for joking and laughter.

The hasty flight had revealed the character of each refugee. One might be carried away by false fears, by unreasonable terror; another would succumb to unnecessary anxiety. One might go too far where another did not go far enough; one would be too compliant, another too hasty—and each time there was such teasing and poking fun at one another, that their unhappy journey was more enjoyable than any excursion they had ever made before.

Sometimes we can watch a comedy for a stretch without laughing at the comic antics, but in a tragedy we immediately laugh uproariously at something inappropriate; it is the same in the real world, where some ludicrous aspect of a terrible misfortune may make us burst out laughing—often instantly, certainly in retrospect.

Louisa, the Baroness's eldest daughter, was made to suffer most, because she was supposed to have completely lost her head at the first

alarm. She was a vivacious, impetuous and, in better days, domineering young woman, but in her confusion, indeed in a kind of trance, she had in all seriousness gathered the most useless things to be packed and had even mistaken an old family servant for her fiancé. She was miserable enough to know that as a soldier in the allied army he was in constant danger and that the general disruption would delay, perhaps even entirely prevent, their marriage.

Her elder brother Frederick, a resolute young man, faithfully carried out everything his mother decided: he accompanied the procession on horseback, and served as courier, caravan leader, and guide all in one. The younger son, a promising lad, had a cultivated tutor who kept the Baroness company in the carriage. In another carriage Cousin Carl followed with an elderly Abbé, who had long since become the family's indispensable companion. They were accompanied by two female relatives, one elderly and one quite young. Chambermaids and valets followed in smaller conveyances. Several heavily loaded wagons, which fell behind at various stops along the way, concluded the cavalcade.

It is easy to imagine that they had all been unhappy to abandon their homes, but Cousin Carl found it especially painful to leave the far bank of the Rhine. This was not because he had perhaps left a mistress behind, as his youth, good looks, and passionate nature might have led one to believe. Instead, he had been seduced by that dazzling beauty who under the name of Liberty had won so many devoted admirers, first in secret and then for all the world to see. And no matter how badly she treated some of these admirers, she was ardently courted by all the rest.

Lovers are usually blinded by their passion, and Cousin Carl was no exception. They are bent on possessing one supreme happiness and imagine that they can do without everything else. Rank, wealth, social connections seem to vanish to nothing while the one desire reigns supreme. Parents, relatives, and friends become strangers, while what we have acquired absorbs the whole being to the exclusion of everything else.

Cousin Carl abandoned himself to his passion and made no attempt to conceal it from others. He considered himself all the more entitled to surrender to such sentiments, since he was an aristocrat and, though a younger son, stood to come into a sizeable fortune. This very property which he was one day to inherit now lay in the hands of the enemy, who were not taking the best care of it. Nevertheless Carl could not hate a nation that promised the world so many advantages—and whose convictions he judged by the public speeches and statements of a mere handful of its citizens. He often disturbed the peace of the group—to the extent that they still had any—by praising to the skies every act, whether good or evil, of the New Franks, and noisily rejoicing in their

victories. This irritated the others all the more: they could not help but suffer more keenly when their troubles were doubled by the malicious joy of their friend and relation.

Frederick had several times fallen out with Carl and finally stopped speaking to him altogether. The Baroness skillfully managed to restrain him at least for short periods. Louisa gave him the hardest time by casting aspersions on his character and judgment—often quite unfairly. The tutor silently agreed with him; the Abbé silently disagreed. The chambermaids, attracted by his good looks and impressed with his liberality, loved to hear him talk. They felt that his convictions entitled them to look openly at him with those tender eyes that in the past they had modestly lowered.

Their daily needs, the obstacles of the journey, and the uncomfortable quarters usually kept their minds on the concerns of the moment. Everywhere they met crowds of French and German refugees who varied greatly in their behavior and their past experiences. This often made them reflect on the importance in these times of practicing all possible virtues, especially impartiality and forbearance.

One day the Baroness remarked that times of general confusion and distress showed more clearly than any other how badly brought-up most people were. "Our whole social system," she said, "is like a ship that can transport a good many people, old and young, healthy and sick, across dangerous waters even during a storm. Only at the moment when the ship founders do you find out who can swim, and under such conditions even good swimmers may drown.

"For the most part refugees carry their faults and absurd habits with them, and that amazes us. But just as the Englishman is never without his tea kettle when he travels in any of the four corners of the globe, so the rest of humanity trails along its presumption, vanity, intemperance, impatience, obstinacy, wrong-headedness, and joy in taking advantage. The thoughtless enjoy their flight as if they were on an excursion; the demanding insist, even though they are now beggars, that everything be at their beck and call. How rare are people of simple integrity, who are able to live and sacrifice themselves for others."

While they made numerous acquaintances who prompted reflections of this kind, the winter passed. Fortune once again favored German arms. The French had been pushed back across the Rhine, Frankfurt liberated, and Mainz surrounded.

Hoping for the continued progress of the victorious forces and eager to reclaim part of their property, the family hastened to an estate they owned, beautifully situated on the right bank of the Rhine. It refreshed them to see the lovely river once again flowing beneath their windows; joyfully they once again took possession of every part of their house. They greeted the family furniture, the old pictures, and all their house-

hold effects with affection; how precious seemed even the most trifling object long given up for lost. And how their hopes rose that even on the other side of the Rhine they might, in days to come, find everything just as they had left it.

No sooner had word of the Baroness's arrival spread through the neighborhood than all her former friends, acquaintances, and servants hastened to talk with her, recount the events of the past few months, and in many instances ask her advice and help.

In the midst of these visits, she was most pleasantly surprised when Privy Councillor von S - - - arrived with his family. From earliest youth work had been a necessity to him; he deserved and possessed the confidence of his sovereign. He was a man of strict principles and independent judgment. He was precise in speech and in conduct, and demanded that others be the same. Consistent behavior seemed to him the highest virtue.

His prince, his country, he himself had suffered much from the French invasion. He had experienced the arbitrariness of a nation that constantly talked about law, and the tyranny of those who never stopped talking about freedom. He had observed that the mob remained true to its nature and, in this case as in so many others, with great fervor took words for deeds and appearance for actuality. His acuteness readily discovered the results of an unfortunate campaign as well as the effects of the sentiments and opinions now so widespread. Nevertheless it could not be denied that his view was often jaundiced and his judgments colored by emotion.

After so many hardships, his wife, a childhood companion of the Baroness, was blissful in the arms of her friend. They had been raised and educated together and had no secrets from one another. They had always confided everything either in person or by letter—their first loves, the more important concerns of marriage, the joys, cares and sorrows of motherhood—and had never lost touch. Only the recent political troubles had interrupted their mutual exchange. Their conversations, therefore, were all the livelier now, and they had more to say to each other than ever before. In the meantime the Privy Councillor's daughters exchanged confidences with Louisa.

Unfortunately their joy in the enchanting countryside was often disrupted by the cannon's roar, which the shifting wind carried more or less distinctly to their ears. With the rumors that continually streamed in, it was equally impossible to avoid political discussion. Both factions expressed their views very heatedly and often disrupted the momentary tranquillity. Intemperate people do not abstain from wine and rich foods even though they know from experience that it will make them ill; so most of the group could not now restrain themselves and gave

in to the irresistible urge to hurt one another and thereby to make life unpleasant for themselves.

It is easy to imagine that the Privy Councillor led the faction that supported the old regime, while Carl championed the opposite side, which hoped that the changes at hand would heal and revitalize the old, ailing society.

At first the discussions were reasonably calm, due largely to the tactful remarks with which the Baroness managed to maintain a balance between the two factions. But as the blockade of Mainz became a siege, and as their concern grew for the lovely city and its remaining inhabitants, both sides expressed their views with unrestrained vehemence.

The chief topic of conversation was the Jacobin sympathizers who had remained there; everyone expected them either to be punished or released, depending on whether he condemned or approved their actions.

Among the first group was the Privy Councillor, whose arguments irritated Carl most when he attacked the judgment of these people and accused them of complete ignorance of the world and of themselves.

"How blind they must be," he exclaimed one afternoon when the discussion was getting especially heated, "to expect any sympathy from a vast, confused, war-torn nation that even in peaceful moments respects nothing but itself! They will be seen as tools, used for a while, and finally be thrown away, or at least totally neglected. They are mistaken indeed, if they think they will ever be accepted in the ranks of the French nation!

"Nothing is more ridiculous to the great and powerful than someone small and weak who, in the darkness of delusion, in ignorance of himself, his abilities and his situation, considers himself their equal. And do you really think that after the good luck it has enjoyed up until now the 'great nation' will be any less proud and overbearing than any other royal conqueror?

"How many of them who are now trotting about decked in official robes will curse the whole masquerade when, after helping to impose a detestable new regime on their countrymen, they find themselves mistreated by those whom they had entirely trusted? Indeed, I think it very probable that at the surrender of the town, which must soon take place, all these people will be abandoned or turned over to our forces. Then let them receive their just reward, then let them receive the punishment they deserve—and I am judging them as impartially as I can."

"Impartially!" exclaimed Carl. "If only I never had to hear that word again! How can we condemn these people out of hand? True, they have not spent their lives working in the time-honored way for the

advantage of themselves and other members of the privileged classes. True, they have not taken over the few habitable rooms in the old structure, and made themselves at home. Instead they have suffered the discomforts of the neglected wings of your palace of state—all the more because they have been forced to spend their days there in misery and oppression. Their workaday routine has not seduced them into accepting things merely because they were used to them. No, they have had no choice but to look on in silence at the prejudice, disorder, negligence, and clumsiness with which your statesmen still pretend to earn respect; no, they could only secretly hope that effort and enjoyment might be more evenly apportioned! Who can deny that there are some well-intentioned and capable men among them who, though they may not be able to create universal happiness at this very moment, have at least succeeded in their efforts to alleviate evil and to prepare for a better future? And, since there are such people, who would not pity them, now the moment is fast approaching that will rob them, perhaps forever, of all their hopes!”

The Privy Councillor replied with a bitter joke about the tendency of young people to idealize everything; Carl, in turn, did not spare those who can think only in obsolete terms and automatically reject whatever does not fit into them.

The dispute grew ever more violent as accusations were hurled back and forth, and the two opposing parties aired every issue that had divided so many well-meaning circles in recent years. In vain the Baroness tried to negotiate a truce, if not actual peace, between the combatants. Even the Privy Councillor’s wife, whose charm had won her some power over Carl, was unable to influence him, particularly as her husband continued to fling well-aimed shafts at youth and inexperience, and to ridicule the penchant of children to play with fire, which they could not control.

Carl, beside himself with rage, now declared openly that he wished the French army all the luck in the world; and that he called on every German to bring an end to traditional servitude; that he was convinced that the French nation would know how to value those noble Germans who had taken her part and, far from sacrificing or abandoning them, would regard them as her own and heap honors, goods, and confidence upon them.

The Privy Councillor asserted in response that it was absurd to think that in the event of a surrender or whatever, the French would give these people even a moment’s thought; instead these people would surely fall into the hands of the Allies, and he hoped to see them all hanged.

Carl could not bear this threat and shouted that he hoped the guillotine would reap a rich harvest in Germany, too, and would not miss

a single guilty head. He added a number of strong personal remarks, directed at the Privy Councillor, which were thoroughly offensive.

"Well then," said the Privy Councillor, "I must take leave of people who no longer honor anything normally considered worthy of respect. I regret that I should be exiled for the second time, and now by a fellow countryman. But I see that we can expect less mercy from him than from the New Franks, and I find the old proverb confirmed that it is better to fall into the hands of the Turks than of renegades."

With these words he rose and left the room. His wife followed him, and the company fell silent. The Baroness expressed her displeasure in brief but forceful terms; Carl paced back and forth. The Privy Councillor's wife returned in tears and reported that her husband was having their things packed up and had already ordered horses. The Baroness went to try to change his mind; meanwhile the young ladies cried and kissed each other, and were distraught at this hasty and unexpected parting. The Baroness returned; she had achieved nothing. They began to collect everything that belonged to the visitors and suffered bitterly the sorrows of separation and departure. All hope vanished with the last of the boxes and cases. The horses arrived and there were more tears.

The carriage drove off and the Baroness followed it with tears in her eyes. She left the window and sat down at her embroidery frame. Everyone was silent, indeed ill at ease, especially Carl, who sat in a corner leafing through the pages of a book and often glanced at his aunt. Finally he rose and picked up his hat, as if he intended to leave; but at the door he turned, approached the embroidery frame, and said with quiet dignity: "I have offended you, my dear Aunt, I have upset you. Please forgive my thoughtlessness, I acknowledge my fault and regret it deeply."

"I will forgive you," answered the Baroness, "and not hold it against you, for you are a good and noble man. But you cannot repair the damage you have done. Because of you I have lost the companionship of a friend whom misfortune itself had just restored to me after a long separation and with whom I could for hours forget our misery and what is still before us. For so long she had been driven about in fear and been hounded from place to place. Scarcely had she begun to relax with old and well-loved friends, in a comfortable home in pleasant surroundings, than she is again forced to take flight. And we lose the company of her husband who, eccentric as he may be in many ways, is nevertheless a fine and honorable man with an inexhaustible knowledge of people and the world, of events and circumstances, which he is always ready to share with ease and charm. Your vehemence has deprived us of all this happiness. How can you make up to us what we have lost?"

CARL. "Spare me, my dear Aunt. I am ashamed enough. Don't let me see the consequences quite so clearly!"

THE BARONESS. "On the contrary, you should see them as clearly as possible! This is not the time to spare you. The only question is whether you can change. It isn't the first time you have been guilty of this fault, and it will not be the last. Ah, you strange people! Can't the suffering that has driven you together under one roof, crowded you into a single tight place, make you tolerant of each other? Aren't the disasters that are continually crashing down on you and the people you care for enough to convince you? Can't you control yourselves and behave sensibly and moderately towards people who are not trying to take anything away from you or rob you? Must your tempers work so blindly and relentlessly, like political upheavals, like a thunderstorm or some other natural phenomenon?"

Carl did not answer. The tutor left the window where he had been standing, went over to the Baroness and said, "He will improve. This will serve as a warning to him, as to us all. Every day we shall review our behavior, and call to mind the pain you have suffered; we will show that we can practice self-control."

BARONESS. "How easily men can deceive themselves, especially where self-control is concerned! Control is such an attractive word, and it sounds so noble to want to control ourselves. Men are excessively fond of talking about it, and would like us to believe that they are prepared to practice it seriously; and I have never in my life met one single man who was capable of controlling himself in even the smallest detail! They make a great show of renouncing things they don't care about a bit; but if there is something they really want, they convince themselves and other people that it's marvellous, necessary, unavoidable, and indispensable. I don't think I know even one man who is capable of giving up anything at all."

TUTOR. "You are seldom unjust, and I have never seen you so overcome by irritation and anger as at this moment."

BARONESS. "At least I have no cause to be ashamed of my anger. When I think of my friend in her carriage, uncomfortable, in tears and remembering how we mistreated our guests, I am very angry with you all."

TUTOR. "Even in the greatest misfortune I have not seen you so troubled and exasperated."

BARONESS. "A small misfortune that follows a greater one can be the last straw. And it is not a small misfortune to lose a friend!"

TUTOR. "Calm yourself, and trust us all to improve and to do all we can to please you."

BARONESS. "No! None of you shall lure me into trusting you. In future I shall command and be mistress in my own home."

"Do command, and give us orders," said Carl. "You will have no cause to complain of disobedience."

"Now, now, I shan't be as strict as all that," the Baroness answered with a smile, pulling herself together. "I don't like to give orders, especially to such liberal-minded people. But I will give you some advice, and add a request."

TUTOR. "Both shall be inviolable laws."

BARONESS. "It would be foolish to try to divert into other channels the interest that all of us must feel in politics, whose victims we have, to our regret, now become. I cannot change the attitudes that develop, take root, become confirmed, and operate in each of us; and it would be both foolish and harsh to expect you not to communicate them. But I can ask of the company in which I live, that like-minded people come together quietly to talk in a civilized manner about matters they know they agree on. In your own room, on walks, or if you meet someone who shares your feelings, by all means reveal your thoughts, support this opinion or that, indeed revel in the joy of passionate conviction. But my dear friends, in the company of others let us not forget how much of our personal ways we had to give up in order to be sociable, even before all these issues came up; and let us remember that as long as the world lasts, everyone, at least on the surface, must practice self-control in order to be sociable. It is not in the name of virtue, but in the name of common courtesy, that I ask you to give to me and to other people the same consideration in these times that you have shown all your life to anyone you happened to meet on the street.

"In any case," the Baroness went on, "I don't know what has got into us, how all civilized behavior can so suddenly disappear. Everyone used to be so careful in public not to touch on a subject that might distress others. In the company of a Catholic no Protestant would ridicule a religious ceremony; the most zealous Catholic would never let the Protestant suspect that the old religion was a more certain path to eternal bliss. In the presence of a mother who had lost her son one did not show too much pleasure in one's own children; and if something tactless was said, everyone was embarrassed and tried to make amends. But don't we nowadays do just the opposite? We seem to seek every opportunity to bring up things that will irritate and shock the others. In future, my dear children and friends, let us return to the old ways! We have known so much sadness and soon perhaps smoke by day and fire by night will announce the destruction of the homes and belongings we have left behind. Let us not discuss even these tidings in anger, let us not harp continually on what has already caused us all such pain.

"When your father died, did you seize every occasion to remind me of this irreparable loss? Didn't you try to avoid everything that could recall his memory at an inopportune moment and to lighten our loss, to heal the wound by your quiet efforts and your kindness? Don't we now have an even greater need to practice that humane forbearance which often achieves more than well-meaning, but clumsy, help? Now, it is not an isolated misfortune here or there that wounds this man or that among a happy multitude, so that one sorrow is soon absorbed in the general well-being; but at the present time among a huge mass of unfortunates hardly anyone, whether through temperament or education, by accident or by effort of will, enjoys peace of mind."

CARL. "You have humbled us enough now, my dear Aunt. Won't you extend your hand to us again?"

BARONESS. "Here it is, but on condition that you accept its guidance. Let us declare an amnesty! The sooner the better."

The young ladies, who had been crying heartily ever since the departure, now came into the room, but could not bring themselves to give Cousin Carl a friendly look.

"Come here, children!" cried the Baroness. "We have had a serious discussion, which I hope will restore peace and harmony among us and bring back the manners that we have lacked for some time. It has perhaps never been more important for us to turn to one another and to distract ourselves a little, even if only for a few hours each day. Let us make a pact to ban all mention of current events when we are together. How long has it been since we had any interesting and cheering conversation! How long has it been, dear Carl, since you've told us about distant lands and people of whose ways and customs you know so much. How long has it been since you," she said to the tutor, "talked about earlier and recent history, and compared the different centuries and the people who lived in them. And what has become of the pretty poems that the girls so often brought for our enjoyment? Where have our free-wheeling philosophical speculations disappeared to? Have you lost all joy in taking walks and returning with some curious rock, some plant unfamiliar to us, or some strange insect—all these led at least to pleasant reflections on the grand unity of all creatures. At one time we did all this spontaneously; now let us agree to restore these conversations by intention, by a self-imposed rule! Try as hard as you can to be interesting, useful, and, especially, sociable! We must all abide by this rule even if everything in the world goes to rack and ruin; indeed then we shall need it even more than now. Children, promise!"

They promised eagerly.

"And now, go on out. It's a beautiful evening. Each of you enjoy it in your own way, and then, at supper, for the first time in weeks, let us enjoy the pleasure of friendly conversation!"

They all went their separate ways, leaving only Louisa sitting beside her mother. She could not readily forget the annoyance of losing her companion, and snappishly refused Carl's invitation to go for a walk with him. Mother and daughter had been sitting quietly side by side for some time when the Abbé returned from a long walk, ignorant of what had occurred in his absence. He put aside his hat and cane, sat down, and was about to tell them something, but Louisa, pretending that she had been engaged in conversation with her mother, cut him off by saying:

"Many people will find the law we have just made rather uncomfortable. Even when we lived in the country before, we often lacked topics of conversation; in the country you don't have the daily opportunity that you have in town to slander some poor girl or run down a young man's character. But at least we were still free to describe the silly antics of great nations, to say that the Germans were just as ridiculous as the French, and to accuse someone or other of being a Jacobin. If these topics are now to be banned, many of us will end up not saying a word."

"Is this attack aimed perhaps at me, young lady?" the old gentleman began with a smile. "Well, you know, I am happy occasionally to sacrifice myself for the rest. True, you are always a credit to the excellent woman who raised you, and everyone finds you pleasant, attractive, and charming. Nevertheless there seems to be a malicious little imp inside you who gets out of control and takes out his ill-will on me, to get even for the way you are always penning him up. Tell me, my lady," he went on, turning to the Baroness, "what happened during my absence, and what topics have been banned?"

The Baroness told him everything. He listened attentively and then answered: "This arrangement should not prevent us from amusing one another, and may even give some of us a bit of an edge."

"I'd like to see that," said Louisa.

"There's nothing onerous about this rule," he went on, "for people who look for entertainment to their own resources. In fact it will be a pleasure, for they can speak openly of interests they used to pursue surreptitiously. Please don't be offended if I say this, young lady, but isn't it society that breeds the tale-bearers, the busybodies, and slanderers? I have seldom seen people at a serious reading or a presentation intended to stimulate heart and mind look as attentive and thoughtful as when they listened to the latest gossip, especially if it was derogatory. Ask yourself and ask anyone: What makes news attractive? Not its importance, not its consequences, but its novelty. For the most part only what is new seems important, because without a clear context it arouses amazement, momentarily stirs our imagination, just grazes our emotions, and requires no mental effort whatever. Everyone can

take a lively interest in such new things without the least trouble to himself. Indeed, since a series of news items continually pulls us from one subject to the next, most people find nothing more pleasant than this stimulus to ceaseless diversion, this convenient and never-ending opportunity to vent their malice and spleen."

"Well," exclaimed Louisa, "you seem to know what you're doing. You used to run down individuals; now you're taking on the whole human race."

"I don't ask that you ever be fair to me," he replied. "But this much I must say to you: those of us who are dependent on society must follow its dictates. Indeed, it is more acceptable to do something offensive than to impose, and nothing in the world is a greater imposition than to expect people to reflect and observe. We must avoid anything that tends in this direction, and in any case pursue in private what is unacceptable at public gatherings."

"In private you may well have downed a few bottles of wine and snoozed away many an hour of broad daylight," Louisa interrupted.

"I have never attached much importance to what I do," the old gentleman continued, "for I know that compared to other people I am very lazy. Nevertheless I have put together a collection that might afford many pleasant hours' entertainment to a company in our frame of mind."

"What kind of collection is it?" asked the Baroness.

"No doubt just a scandalous chronicle," Louisa chimed in.

"You are mistaken," said the old man.

"We'll see," replied Louisa.

"Let him have his say," said the Baroness. "And in any case don't get into the habit of speaking to people in a harsh and unfriendly way, not even if they pass it off as a joke. We have no reason to cultivate bad habits, even in fun. Tell me, my friend, what do you have in your collection? Will it provide suitable entertainment for us? Have you been collecting for long? Why haven't we heard about it before?"

"I will tell you about it," the old gentleman answered. "I have been in this world a long time and have always taken an interest in what happens to different people. I have neither the strength nor the courage to review the history of the world at large, and isolated historical episodes confuse me. But of the many personal histories, true and false, that circulate in public or are whispered about in private, some have a greater, more genuine charm than mere novelty; some amuse us by an ingenious twist; some reveal for a moment the innermost secrets of human nature; and others delight us by their bizarre absurdities. Countless stories attract our attention and our malice in ordinary life, and are as ordinary as the people who tell or live them. Of these I have collected the ones that I felt had some special quality

that touched and intrigued my judgment, or my heart, and whose recollection gave me a moment of sincere, calm pleasure."

"I am very curious," said the Baroness, "to hear what kind of stories they are and what they are really about."

"As you can imagine," the old man replied, "they rarely deal with lawsuits or family problems. These subjects are usually of interest only to the people suffering from them."

LOUISA. "What are they about then?"

OLD MAN. "I will not deny that as a rule they treat of the feelings by which men and women are brought together or divided, made happy or unhappy, and more often confused than enlightened."

LOUISA. "Really? So you are trying to pass off a collection of lewd jokes as a refined entertainment? Forgive me, Mama, but it seems such an obvious conclusion, and after all, one ought to be allowed to speak the truth."

OLD MAN. "I hope that you will find in my whole collection nothing that I would term lewd."

LOUISA. "And what exactly do you term lewd?"

OLD MAN. "I cannot bear lewd talk or lewd stories, for they describe something that is vulgar, something not worth noticing or mentioning, as if it were remarkable and exciting, and they arouse spurious desires instead of occupying the mind with something pleasant. They conceal what we should either look at without veils or turn our eyes away from altogether."

LOUISA. "I don't understand you. Surely you intend to tell your stories with at least some elegance? You cannot plan to offend our ears with crude anecdotes? Is this to be a school for young ladies, and you think we should thank you in addition?"

OLD MAN. "Neither the one nor the other. In the first place, you will be learning nothing you did not know before, especially since for some time now I have observed that you never fail to read a certain kind of review in the journals."

LOUISA. "That was offensive."

OLD MAN. "You are to be married, and so I forgive you gladly. I simply wanted to show you that I, too, have arrows that I can use against you."

BARONESS. "I see what you're driving at, but make sure that she understands, too."

OLD MAN. "I need only repeat what I said at the beginning of our conversation. It appears that she hasn't the good will to listen."

LOUISA. "What does good will or all this chitchat have to do with it? However you look at it, they'll turn out to be scandalous stories, scandalous in one way or another, and nothing more."

OLD MAN. "Should I repeat, young lady, that a sensible person sees scandal only where he perceives malice or arrogance, the desire to do harm or unwillingness to help; and that he turns his eyes from sights like these? But he will be amused by minor faults and foibles, where a good person comes into mild conflict with himself, with his desires or intentions; where silly and conceited fools are shamed, reproved, or deceived; where presumption is punished in a natural, even casual way; where plans, desires, and hopes are first spoiled, blocked, and thwarted, and then quite unexpectedly furthered, fulfilled, and confirmed. But best of all he likes quietly to contemplate events in which chance plays with human weakness and inadequacy; and none of the heroes of those tales he preserves need fear his censure or expect his praise."

BARONESS. "Your introduction makes me eager to hear a sample. I was not aware—and we have generally moved in the same circles—that much had happened that would qualify for such a collection."

OLD MAN. "Of course, much depends on the observer and how he looks at it. But there again I won't deny that I have also taken many things from old books and traditions. Now and then you may enjoy meeting old friends in a new guise. But precisely this gives me an advantage, which I insist upon retaining: no one may interpret my stories!"

LOUISA. "But surely you won't forbid us to recognize our friends and neighbors and, if we like, decipher the riddle?"

OLD MAN. "By no means. But in such a case you must allow me in turn to pull out an ancient volume to prove that this story happened, or was made up, hundreds of years ago. In the same way you must allow me a secret smile if you take for an old fairy tale something that happened right before our eyes, but that you do not recognize in this form."

LOUISA. "You always have an answer. The best course is to make peace for this evening, and you can give us a quick little sample."

OLD MAN. "Please allow me in this case to be disobedient. I am saving this entertainment for the full assembled company. We must not deprive them of it, and I warn you ahead of time that nothing I will say has any intrinsic value. But if, after some serious conversation, people would like to relax a little while; if, after eating their fill of good things, they would fancy a light dessert, then I will be ready, and hope that the dish I serve will prove tasty."

BARONESS. "Then we will simply have to wait until tomorrow."

LOUISA. "I am extremely curious to find out what he will offer us!"

OLD MAN. "You ought not to be, Miss. High expectations are seldom gratified."

That evening after supper, while the Baroness retired early, the others remained together, talking about the latest news and rumors that were spreading. As is usual at such times they were uncertain what to believe and what to reject.

The old family companion said: "I think the most comfortable solution is to believe what pleases us and reject out of hand what does not, and to accept whatever else seems possible."

Someone remarked that this was how people normally behaved, and a few turns of the conversation brought them to the decided propensity of human nature to believe in the marvelous. They talked about the gothic and about the supernatural, and when the old man promised sometime to tell them good stories of this kind, Louisa replied: "It would be very nice of you, and we would appreciate it very much, if you would tell us one right now, since we are all together in the right mood. We would listen carefully and be very grateful."

Without needing to be asked twice, the Abbé began as follows:

"When I was living in Naples, an incident occurred that attracted a lot of attention, and about which peoples' verdicts were very different. Some claimed the story was a total fabrication, others that it was true but involved a fraud. The latter faction, in turn, was divided: they disagreed about who could have been the deceiver. Still others claimed that spiritual natures might well be able to influence physical bodies, and that miraculous occurrences need not invariably be regarded as either lies or frauds. Now for the story itself!

"A singer named Antonelli was in my time the darling of the Neapolitan public. In the flower of her youth, beauty, and talents, she lacked none of those qualities with which a woman charms and attracts the crowd, and delights a few chosen friends. She was not indifferent to fame and love, but being by nature moderate and sensible, she knew how to enjoy the pleasures of both without losing that self-control so essential to a woman in her position. All the young, wealthy, distinguished men flocked after her, but she accepted only a few. And although, in choosing her lovers, she generally followed her eyes and her heart, throughout her little adventures she displayed a firmness and strength of character that won respect from everyone who observed her closely. I had the opportunity to observe her for a time, while I was close to one of her favorites.

"Several years had passed and she had known plenty of men, and among them many fools, weak and unreliable. She had come to believe that a lover who in one certain respect fulfills a woman's every need, generally fails her precisely where she most needs his support: namely in personal crises, household affairs, or when quick decisions are needed. Indeed, she believed, he might actually harm her by thinking only of

himself, and be driven in his selfishness to give her the worst possible advice and to lure her to the most dangerous steps.

"Her past relationships had generally failed to engage her intellect, and that too now required nourishment. She wanted finally to have a friend, and no sooner had she felt this need than there appeared among her suitors a young man in whom she immediately placed all her confidence, and who appeared in every way worthy of it.

"He was a Genoese who because of important business affairs was at the time living in Naples. The most careful education had enhanced his considerable natural talent. His knowledge was extensive, his mind and body fully developed, and his conduct was exemplary in that he never forgot himself, yet seemed always to forget himself in his interest for others. He had been blessed with the business acumen of his native city, and regarded all tasks from the long-term perspective. Yet his situation was far from ideal. His firm had embarked on some very risky speculations and was involved in dangerous lawsuits. As time went on, affairs grew even more complicated, and his concern about them lent him a melancholy air that was very becoming and gave our young woman the more courage to seek his friendship, because she felt that he too needed a friend.

"He had seen her so far only on public occasions. But at his first request, she allowed him to come to her home, indeed pressed him to visit her; and he did not fail to come.

"She wasted no time in revealing her confidence and her wish. He was amazed and pleased at her proposal. She earnestly begged him to remain her friend and to make none of the claims of a lover. She told him about a difficulty in which she was currently involved, and with his varied experience he was able to advise her most effectively and to act promptly to her advantage. He in turn confided his situation to her; and since she encouraged and comforted him, since ideas emerged in her presence that might otherwise not have occurred to him so quickly, she appeared to act as his adviser also. Thus a mutual friendship, based on the deepest respect and the noblest desires, had soon been established between them.

"But unfortunately when people accept conditions, they do not always consider whether they are possible. He had pledged to be only a friend and to make no claims to become her lover. Yet he could not deny that her accepted lovers were constantly in his way, and that he resented, indeed, utterly detested them. He found it especially painful when she capriciously entertained him with the good and bad points of one of them, all of whose faults she seemed to know clearly; and yet perhaps that very evening, as if to mock her esteemed friend, she might be resting in the arms of an unworthy man.

"Soon—whether fortunately or unfortunately—her heart again became free. Her friend observed this with pleasure and tried to show her that he most deserved the vacant place. She complied with his wishes, but not without resistance and reluctance. 'I fear,' she said, 'that by this concession I will lose the most valuable thing in the world, a friend.' She had predicted correctly. For scarcely had he functioned for a time in his dual capacity, than his demands became rather annoying. As a friend he required absolute respect; as a lover absolute affection; and as an intelligent and amiable man, constant entertainment. But this was by no means what the high-spirited girl had in mind. She had no vocation for self-sacrifice and no desire to concede exclusive rights to anyone. Therefore she tactfully arranged gradually to shorten his visits, to see him less often, and let him see that she would not give up her freedom for any price.

"As soon as he noticed, he was miserable, and unfortunately this blow did not fall alone, for his financial situation was deteriorating very badly. And he had only himself to blame, since from his youth he had treated his fortune as inexhaustible, and had neglected his business interests in order to travel and cut a more glamorous figure in society than his birth or income allowed. The lawsuits on which he set his hopes were costly and slow-moving. Because of them he went several times to Palermo, and during his last journey the shrewd girl made various changes in her living arrangements in order to detach him from her gradually. He came back to find her living at a different address, some distance from his own, and saw the Marquis of S - - - , who at that time exercised great influence in the theatrical world, coming and going freely from her home. This overwhelmed him, and he fell gravely ill. As soon as the news reached his mistress, she hastened to his bedside, looked after him, and arranged for his care. Learning that he was short of money, she left him a considerable sum, enough to reassure him for some time.

"By his presumptuous attempt to curb her freedom, her lover had already lost his attractiveness for her. As her affection for him decreased she observed him more closely; finally, the discovery that he had so grossly mismanaged his own affairs lowered her opinion of his good sense and character. In the meantime he did not notice the great change in her. Instead, her concern for his recovery, the constancy with which she spent half a day at a time at his bedside, seemed a sign of her friendship and love, rather than of her pity, and he hoped to be restored after his recovery to all his rights.

"How mistaken he was! In proportion as his health returned and his strength was renewed, her affection and confidence evaporated; indeed, he now seemed to her as tiresome as he had formerly been attractive. His temper, moreover, had, without his realizing it in the

course of events, become extremely bitter and irritable; he cast all guilt for his troubles on others and insisted he had made no errors. He considered himself an aggrieved and troubled victim and expected compensation for all his wrongs and sufferings from the complete devotion of his mistress.

"He approached her with these claims as soon as he was able to go out and visit her. He demanded nothing less than that she devote herself exclusively to him, send away her other friends and acquaintances, give up the theater, and live with and for him alone. She showed him the impossibility of his demands, first playfully and then gravely, and in the end was unfortunately forced to tell him the sad truth that their relationship was completely at an end. He left and did not see her again.

"He lived a few years longer, seeing almost no one, indeed only a pious elderly lady who shared a house with him and lived on a small pension. During this time he won first one and, soon after, the other of his lawsuits; but his health had been undermined and his life's happiness lost. From some minor cause he again fell gravely ill; the doctor told him he would die. He heard the verdict without reluctance, but desired to see his beautiful mistress once more. He sent to her a servant who in happier times had brought him many favorable replies. He made his request; she refused. He sent a second time, imploring her to come; she persisted in her answer. Finally, it was already late at night, he sent a third time; she was upset and confided her difficulty to me, since I was just then having supper with the Marquis and several other friends at her home. I advised her and begged her to do her friend this final act of kindness; she seemed uncertain but after some reflection pulled herself together. She sent the servant away with her refusal, and he did not return.

"We sat talking freely after dinner and were all cheerful and in good spirits. It was around midnight when there suddenly sounded a plaintive, piercing, alarming, echoing cry. We started, looked at each other, and peered about to see what would happen next. The voice had emerged from the center of the room and seemed to die away along the walls. The Marquis stood up and sprang to the window, and the rest of us attended to the lady, who lay in a faint. Only slowly did she regain consciousness. No sooner had the jealous and impetuous Italian seen her eyes open than he bitterly reproached her. 'When you agree on signals with your friends,' he said, 'let them be less obvious and violent.' She replied with her usual presence of mind that as she had the right to see anyone in her home at any time, she would hardly choose to preface hours of pleasure with such melancholy and terrible sounds.

"And certainly the sound was incredibly frightening. Its long resounding vibrations had lingered in everyone's ears, indeed in our very limbs. She was pale, upset, and constantly on the verge of fainting; we had to stay with her half the night. Nothing further was heard. The next night the same company, not as cheerful as the day before, but calm enough; and—at the same hour the same violent, fearful sound.

"Meanwhile we had made countless conjectures about the nature and source of the cry and exhausted our ideas. Why should I go into detail? Whenever she dined at home, the cry was heard at the same time; sometimes it seemed louder and sometimes fainter. All Naples was talking about it. All the servants, all her friends and acquaintances were concerned, and the police were even called in. Spies and watchmen were posted. From the street the sound seemed to originate in the open air; inside the room, it was also heard right at hand. When she dined out nothing was heard; whenever she was at home the sound came.

"But even away from home she was not completely safe from this malicious companion. Her charm had gained her entry to the most distinguished houses. She was welcome everywhere as good company, and to elude her malevolent guest she had grown accustomed to spending her evenings out.

"A man respected for his age and position was driving her home one evening in his carriage. As she is parting from him outside her door the sound starts between the two of them, and the man, who knew the story as well as a thousand others, is lifted into his carriage more dead than alive.

"Another time a young tenor of whom she was fond is driving through the city with her in the evening to visit a friend. He had heard people talk about this strange phenomenon and, being a light-hearted sort, was skeptical about such a miracle. They talked about the situation. 'I'd like to hear the voice of your invisible companion, too,' he said. 'Call him up! After all there are two of us and we won't be afraid!' Recklessness or fearlessness—I don't know what impelled her—but she calls the spirit, and at that moment the deafening sound comes right from the middle of the carriage. It sounds quickly three times in a row, very loud, and disappears, with a whimpering echo. They were both found unconscious in the carriage outside her friend's house; it took some effort to revive them and find out what had happened.

"It was some time before she recovered. The constant fright undermined her health and the sonorous ghost seemed to grant her a reprieve; indeed, she even hoped, because it was silent for so long, that she was completely free of it at last. But this hope was premature.

"At the end of Carnival she took a trip with another woman and a chambermaid. She wanted to make a visit in the country; night fell

before they could reach their destination, and when, in addition, something went wrong with the carriage, they had to spend the night in an uncomfortable inn and manage as best they could.

"Her friend was already in bed and, having lit a night light, the maid was just about to get into the other bed with her mistress when the latter said to her jokingly: 'Here we are at the end of the earth and the weather is dreadful; do you think he could find us here?' At once he was heard, louder and more terrible than ever. Her friend literally thought that the devil was in the room, jumped out of bed, ran down the stairs just as she was, and roused the whole house. No one closed an eye that night. Yet this was also the last time the cry was heard. Unfortunately, however, the uninvited guest soon found another, even more annoying way to make his presence known.

"He had kept quiet for some time when suddenly one evening at the usual hour, as she was dining with her guests, a shot, as if from a shotgun or heavily loaded pistol, came through the window. Everyone heard the report, everyone saw the flash, but careful inspection of the glass revealed no damage at all. Nevertheless they took the incident very seriously, and everyone believed that her life was in danger. They hurried to the police; the neighboring houses were investigated and when nothing suspicious was found, sentries were posted next day from cellar to attic. Her house was carefully searched, lookouts were assigned to the street.

"All these precautions were in vain. For three months in succession, the shot came at the same moment through the same windowpane without damaging the glass and—remarkably—always exactly one hour before midnight, despite the fact that Naples is on Italian time and no real account is taken of the midnight hour.

"People finally grew accustomed to this manifestation as they had to the other and paid little attention to the ghost's harmless mischief. Often the shot failed to frighten the company or to interrupt their conversation.

"One evening after a very hot day, without thinking about the time, she opened the window in question and stepped out onto the balcony with the Marquis. They had been standing outside for only a few minutes when the shot rang out between them and they were flung backwards into the room, where they reeled to the floor in a faint. When they had recovered he felt on his left cheek, and she on her right, the pain of a hard slap, and since they had suffered no further injury, the incident inspired a variety of witty exchanges.

"After that the shot was not heard again and she thought that she was at last truly free of her invisible persecutor; but one evening when she was out with a friend, an unexpected adventure once again completely terrified her. Their way led through the Chiaia, where her Gen-

oese beloved had formerly lived. There was bright moonlight. The lady sitting beside her asked: 'Isn't that the house where Mr. - - - died?' 'As far as I know it's one of those two,' said the beauty, and at that moment the shot rang out from one of the two houses, and went right through the carriage. The coachman thought they had been attacked and drove off as fast as he could. At their destination the two women were lifted from the carriage, to all appearances dead.

"But this scare was also the last. The invisible companion changed his methods, and a few evenings later loud applause sounded outside her windows. As a popular singer and actress she was more accustomed to this sound. There was nothing inherently frightening about it, and it could more readily be attributed to one of her admirers. She took little notice of it; her friends were more concerned and posted sentries as before. They heard the sound but saw no one before or after, and most of them hoped that these phenomena would soon end completely.

"After a time this sound dissipated also, and changed to more pleasant tones. They were, to be sure, not actually melodious, but they were unbelievably pleasant and delightful. To the most careful observers they seemed to come from a nearby street corner, to float through the air up to the window, and then softly die away. It was as if a heavenly spirit wanted to draw attention by a beautiful prelude to a melody he was just about to perform. Even this tone finally disappeared and was not heard again after the whole strange affair had gone on for about a year and a half."

As the narrator paused for a moment, the others began to express their thoughts and doubts whether the story was true, whether it even could be true.

The old gentleman said that it must be true for anyone to find it interesting, since it had little enough merit as fiction. Then someone remarked that it seemed strange that no inquiries had been made about the deceased friend and the circumstances of his death, since this might perhaps have thrown some light on the affair.

"That did happen," the old man replied. "I myself was curious enough, right after the first incident, to go to his house and find a pretext to visit the lady who at the end had cared for him like a mother. She told me that her friend had had an unbelievable passion for the young woman, that at the end of his life he had spoken almost exclusively of her, and had talked about her sometimes as an angel, sometimes as a devil.

"As his illness overpowered him, she said, he had wished for nothing but to see her once again before he died, probably only in the hope of wresting from her some expression of tenderness, remorse, or some other token of love and friendship. Thus her persistent refusal had been dreadful for him indeed, and her last, decisive refusal had visibly

hastened his end. In despair he had cried out: 'No, nothing shall help her! She avoids me; but even after my death she shall have no peace from me!' With these angry words he died, and we learned but too well that promises can be kept beyond the grave."

Once again the company began to offer opinions and judgments about the story. At last brother Fritz said: "I have a suspicion, which, however, I don't want to tell, until I have reviewed all the circumstances again and tested my conclusions."

When they pressed him harder he tried to avoid a reply by offering to tell a story himself, one which was, he said, of course less interesting than the previous tale, but also of the sort that could never be explained with complete certainty.

"In the home of an upright nobleman, a friend of mine, who lived in an old castle with his large family, there was an orphan girl being raised. By the time she was fourteen she mostly attended the lady of the house and acted as her personal servant. They were perfectly satisfied with her, and she seemed to wish for nothing more than to show gratitude to her benefactors by her attentiveness and loyalty. She was attractive and there were suitors who approached her. The family did not think a match with any of them was likely to make her happy, nor did she manifest even the slightest desire to change her state.

"All of a sudden, whenever the girl went about the house doing her work, knocking was heard here and there under her feet. At first it seemed a coincidence, but since the knocking did not stop and accompanied virtually her every step, she grew nervous and hardly dared to leave her mistress's room, the only place where she was left in peace.

"This knocking was heard by everyone who walked with her or stood nearby. At first it seemed funny, but finally it became unpleasant. The master of the house, a quick-witted man, now investigated the circumstances himself. The knocking was not heard until the girl walked, and moreover not when she put her foot down but only when she raised it to take the next step. But often the blows came irregularly, and they were especially loud whenever she walked diagonally across a great hall.

"The head of the family had some workmen there one day, and when the knocking was at its loudest, he had them tear up some floorboards right behind her. Nothing was found except that a few large rats were exposed, which were hunted with great commotion.

"Irritated by this event and by the confusion, the master seized on a harsh expedient; he took his largest hunting whip down from the wall, and swore to beat the life out of the girl, if the knocking were ever heard again. From that time on she went all over the house without a tap, and no further knocking was heard."

"Which clearly shows," Louisa interrupted, "that the pretty child was her own ghost and for some reason had been playing this prank and pulling her master's leg."

"By no means," replied Fritz. "The people who attributed the effect to a ghost believed that a protective spirit wanted the girl out of the house, but did not wish her any harm. Others were more skeptical and thought that one of her lovers had been smart enough or clever enough to make the sounds, in order to drive the girl out of the house and into his arms. In any case the dear child almost wasted away over the incident and looked like a sad ghost, although once she had been brisk and cheerful, the happiest person in the house. But there is more than one way to explain a physical decline like that."

"It's a shame," Carl replied, "that cases like this are not investigated thoroughly, and that to judge events that interest us so much we must always waver among different probabilities, because not all the circumstances under which such wonders occur have been recorded."

"If only it were not so very difficult to investigate," said the old man, "and to keep all the points and issues that are truly important in mind, at the moment when something like this occurs, so that nothing escapes where deception and error could hide. Is it, after all, so easy to detect a conjuror's tricks, even though we know he's deluding us?"

Scarcely had he finished speaking when a very loud crack was suddenly heard in the corner of the room. Everyone jumped, and Carl joked, "Surely we are not hearing from a dying lover?"

He wished he could have taken back his words, for Louisa turned pale and confessed that she feared for her fiancé's life.

To distract her Fritz picked up the light and went over to the desk standing in the corner. Its curved top was cracked all the way across. They had found the source of the sound; nevertheless it seemed remarkable that this desk, which was an example of Röntgen's best workmanship and which had been standing for several years on the same spot, should have happened to split at just this moment. It had often been praised and exhibited as a model of outstanding and durable carpentry, and now it seemed odd that it should suddenly split without the slightest detectable change in the weather.

"Hurry," said Carl, "let's check this aspect first and look at the barometer!"

The mercury stood exactly where it had for the last few days; and the thermometer had dropped no more than was natural between day and night.

"What a shame we have no hygrometer," he exclaimed. "That's just the instrument we need!"

"It seems," remarked the old man, "that we are always missing the most necessary instruments, when we want to experiment on spirits."

Their reflections were interrupted by a servant who entered in haste and reported that a great fire could be seen in the sky but that no one knew whether it was in the town or their vicinity.

Since the preceding events had made them more susceptible to fright, they were all the more upset by the news than they might have been otherwise. Fritz hurried to the belvedere, where a detailed map of the country was drawn on a large horizontal disk; by this means the locations of various places could be determined fairly exactly even at night. The others waited together, not without anxiety and agitation.

Fritz came back and said: "I have bad news. In all probability the fire is not in town, but on our aunt's estate. I know the area very well and fear I am not mistaken." They lamented the beautiful buildings and calculated the loss. "All the same," said Fritz, "a peculiar notion has come to me that can at least reassure us about the strange portent of the desk. First of all we need to figure out the exact minute at which we heard the sound." They calculated back, and decided it might have been about eleven-thirty.

"Now, you can laugh if you like," Fritz continued, "but I am going to tell you what I suspect. You know that several years ago our mother gave a similar, indeed, one might say, identical, desk to our aunt. Both were made with extreme care at the same time, from the same piece of wood, by the same craftsman. Both of them have lasted splendidly until now, and I would wager that at this moment the other desk is burning up with our aunt's summerhouse and that its twin here is suffering with it. Tomorrow I shall go myself and attempt to verify this strange fact as well as I can."

Whether Frederick really believed what he said or was just trying to calm his sister's fears is unclear; nevertheless, they seized this opportunity to talk about many undeniable sympathies, and in the end decided that a sympathy between pieces of wood grown from one trunk, between works fashioned by one artist, was quite probable. Indeed, they agreed that phenomena of this sort were just as natural as others that occur repeatedly, that we can hold in our own hands and that even then we cannot explain.

"In any case," said Carl, "it seems to me that every phenomenon, like every fact, is interesting in and of itself. Anyone who explains it or relates it to other events really only does it for the fun of it and is teasing us, like a scientist, for example, or a historian. But in fact, a single action or event is interesting not because it is explicable or probable, but because it is true. If the flames destroyed our aunt's desk around midnight, then the strange crack in ours at the same time is a

true event for us, regardless of whether it is explicable and what it may relate to.”

Late as it was, no one felt any inclination to go to bed, and Carl offered to tell a story too, which, he said, was no less interesting than the previous ones, though it might perhaps be more readily explained and understood.

“Marshal de Bassompierre,” he said, “tells it in his memoirs. Allow me to speak in his name:

“For five or six months I had noticed, whenever I crossed the little bridge (for at that time the Pont Neuf had not yet been built) and passed the Sign of the Two Angels, that a beautiful shopkeeper curtsied to me deeply and repeatedly and watched me as far as she could. Struck by her behavior, I returned her gaze and thanked her politely. Once I was riding from Fontainebleau to Paris, and as I once more crossed the little bridge, she stepped to the door of her shop and said to me as I rode by: ‘Your servant, sir!’ I returned her greeting, and as I looked back from time to time, I saw that she had leaned further out to watch me as long as possible.

“A servant was with me, as well as a postilion whom I intended to send back to Fontainebleau that very evening with letters to several ladies. At my order the servant dismounted and went to tell the young woman in my name that I had noticed how she watched and greeted me, and that if she wished to become better acquainted, I would visit her wherever she desired.

“She responded to the servant that he could not have brought better news, and that she would come to whatever place I appointed, with the sole condition that she be permitted to spend a night in the same bed with me.

“I accepted the offer, and asked the servant if he knew of some place where we could meet. He answered that he would take her to a certain procuress; but because there had been outbreaks of plague, he advised me to bring mattresses, blankets and sheets from my own home. I accepted his offer and he promised to prepare me a comfortable bed.

“That evening I went and found a very beautiful woman about twenty years old, in a dainty night-cap, a very fine nightgown, a short green woolen petticoat. She had slippers on her feet and a kind of loose robe thrown over her. I was enchanted, and when I tried to fondle her she politely declined my caresses and asked to lie with me between two sheets. I did as she wished and can say that I have never known a finer woman nor have ever had more pleasure from any. Next morning I asked if I couldn’t see her again, since I wasn’t leaving until Sunday and we had spent Thursday night together.

“She replied that she certainly wanted to even more than I did, but unless I stayed in town all day Sunday it was impossible, because she

could not see me again until Sunday night. When I raised some objections she said: 'You are probably tired of me right now and would like to leave on Sunday; but soon you will remember me and will surely be willing to give up one day in order to spend a night with me.'

"I was easy to persuade and promised to stay Sunday and to come to the same place that evening. Then she answered: 'I know very well, sir, that I have come to a house of ill repute for your sake; but I did it by choice, and my desire for you was so overpowering that I would have agreed to anything. Passion brought me to this dreadful place, but I would consider myself an ordinary prostitute, if I came a second time. Let me die a miserable death if I have ever been available to any man besides my husband and you, and if I ever desire any other! But what would I not do for someone I love, and for a Bassompierre? For his sake I have come to this house, for a man who has made this place respectable by his presence. If you want to see me again, I will meet you at my aunt's house.'

"She described the house to me in great detail and continued: 'I shall expect you between ten and midnight; indeed the door shall be open even later. First you will find a small hallway; don't linger there, for my aunt's door opens on it. Right after comes a staircase, which will take you to the second floor, where I will welcome you with open arms.'

"I made my arrangements, sent on my servants and belongings, and waited impatiently for Sunday night, when I would see the beautiful creature again. By ten o'clock I was already at the appointed place. I found the door she had indicated at once, but it was locked tight, and in the whole house there was light, which seemed to flare up from time to time like a fire. Impatiently I began to knock to announce my arrival, but I heard a man's voice ask who was there.

"I went away and walked around in the streets. Finally desire drew me back to the door. I found it open and rushed through the corridor, up the stairs. But to my amazement I saw two people in the room burning bedstraw and, in the firelight which lit up the whole room, two naked bodies stretched out on the table. I hastily withdrew and on the way out bumped into a pair of gravediggers who asked me what I wanted. I drew my sword to keep them off and went home, not unshaken by this strange sight. Immediately I drank three or four glasses of wine, a remedy against plague that people swear by in Germany, and, after I had rested, began my journey to Lorraine the following day.

"Every effort that I made after my return to learn something about the woman was in vain. I even went to the shop of the Two Angels, but the tenants did not know who had been there before them.

"This encounter involved a person of the lower classes, but I do assure you that except for the disagreeable outcome it would have been one of the most charming I can recall. I have never been able to remember that beautiful little woman without regret."

"This riddle is not so easy either," replied Fritz. "It's never clear whether the nice little woman also died of plague in the house, or whether she only stayed away to avoid it."

"If she'd still been alive," replied Carl, "surely she would have waited for her lover on the street, and no danger would have kept her from seeking him again. I'm afraid she was lying with the others on the table."

"Hush!" said Louisa. "The story is too dreadful. What kind of night will we have if we go to bed with such ideas!"

"I just thought of another story," said Carl, "which is pleasanter and which Bassompierre tells about one of his ancestors:

"A beautiful woman who greatly loved this ancestor met him every Monday in his summerhouse, where he spent the night with her, letting his wife believe meanwhile that he spent this time hunting.

"For two years they had been meeting this way without interruption, when the wife became suspicious, stole to the summerhouse one morning, and found her husband sound asleep with his mistress. She had neither the nerve nor the will to awaken them; instead she took the veil from her head and spread it over the feet of the sleepers.

"When the woman awoke and noticed the veil she cried out, mourned aloud, and lamented that she would not be allowed to see her lover again nor indeed even to come within a hundred miles of him. She left him after she had presented him three gifts—a small fruit measure, a ring and a goblet—for the three daughters of his marriage and enjoined him to take the greatest care of these talismans. They were carefully preserved, and the descendants of the three daughters believed that their possession was the cause of many a stroke of good luck."

"This looks more like the story of beautiful Melusina and other fairy tales like that," said Louisa.

"But the same kind of tradition and a similar talisman has been preserved in our family," replied Frederick.

"What do you mean?" asked Carl.

"It's a secret," he answered. "Only the eldest son may learn it from his father and possess the precious object after his death."

"So you have it in safekeeping?" asked Louisa.

"I think I've already said too much," replied Frederick, lighting the candle and preparing to depart.

The family had breakfasted together as usual and the Baroness was again seated at her embroidery frame. After a few minutes of general

silence their friend the Abbé began with a smile: "It is rare for singers, poets, and storytellers who promise to entertain a company to do so at the right time. Instead they usually have to be urged when they ought to be willing, and insist when people would rather decline their performance. So I hope I will be an exception when I ask if it would appeal to you to hear a story now."

"Yes indeed," replied the Baroness, "and I believe the others will all agree. But if you want to give us a sample story, I must tell you what kind I don't like. I do not enjoy stories in which, as in the *Thousand and One Nights*, one action is embedded within another and one interest is crowded out by the next, where the storyteller feels he must stimulate the curiosity he has thoughtlessly aroused by interruption, and, rather than reward attention with a rational sequence of events, use bizarre, cheap tricks to keep it at high pitch. I think it is wrong to try to transform stories that ought to approach the unity of a poem into mystical riddles, and so to corrupt taste more and more. The subject matter I leave entirely to you, but let us at least see by the form that we are in good society. Give us to begin with a story with few characters and events, imaginative and well-constructed, true-to-life, natural and not commonplace; with as much action as essential and as much sentiment as necessary. It should not be static nor move too slowly, but it should not move too fast either. The characters should be the kind of people we like, not perfect but good, not extraordinary but interesting and likable. Let your story entertain us in the telling, satisfy us when it is over, and leave behind some urge to reflect further upon it."

"If I didn't know you better, my lady," replied the Abbé, "I would believe it was your intention with these exalted and strict requirements to discredit my wares before I've even had a chance to display them. It must be rare indeed for anyone to meet your standards! Even now," he continued, when he had reflected a little, "I'll have to defer the story I had in mind, and I really don't know whether in my haste I may not be choosing badly, if right now on the spur of the moment I begin with an old story that I have always been rather fond of:

"In an Italian seaport there once lived a merchant who had been known from his youth for industry and shrewdness. He was also a good sailor and had amassed great wealth by sailing to Alexandria in order to buy or trade for costly merchandise, which he then sold again at home or shipped to the northern parts of Europe. His fortune grew from year to year, the more so because his business was his greatest pleasure and left him no time for expensive diversions.

"Into his fiftieth year he had been entirely absorbed in this manner and had learned little of the social amusements with which ordinary citizens season their lives. Nor, despite all the charms of his country-

women, had the fair sex ever attracted his notice, except that he knew their love for jewelry and precious objects and could on occasion exploit it.

"He was scarcely prepared, therefore, for his change of heart when his ship entered his native port one day with a rich cargo, just at the time of an annual festival celebrated especially for children. After church, boys and girls gaily made their way through the city in all sorts of costumes, sometimes in processions, sometimes in crowds, and then, in a large open field, they played all kinds of games, performed tricks and feats of skill, and competed for small prizes.

"At first our sailor enjoyed this celebration. But as he watched the excitement of the children and the pleasure of the parents, and as he saw so many people enjoying both present happiness and the pleasantest of prospects, he was greatly struck, when he returned home, by his own solitary state. For the first time his empty house made him uneasy, and his thoughts were filled with self-reproach.

" 'What a miserable fool I am! Why have my eyes been opened so late? Why is it only in old age that I come to see what really makes a man happy? All that effort, all those dangers! And for what? My vaults are full of goods, my chests full of precious metals, and my cabinets full of jewelry and gems; yet none of these makes me happy or satisfied. The more of them I pile up, the more companions they demand: one gem calls for another, one gold coin demands the next. They don't recognize me as master; they call out imperiously: "Go hurry, fetch still more of us! Gold loves only gold, jewels only jewels." They have commanded me this way my whole life long, and only too late do I realize that this brings me no enjoyment. Only now, alas, as the years advance, do I begin to reflect and say to myself: You don't enjoy these treasures and no one will enjoy them after you! Have you ever adorned a beloved wife with them? Have you given them to a daughter as a dowry? Have you given a son the opportunity to win and hold the affection of a fine girl? Never! Of all your possessions neither you nor anyone who belongs to you has ever possessed a single one; and everything you have amassed with such effort will be squandered thoughtlessly by some stranger after your death.

" 'Oh, how different it is for those happy parents who will gather their children around the table tonight, praise their skill, and encourage them to do well. How their eyes were shining this afternoon; what hope the present moment seemed to give them! But should you really have no hope at all? Are you already a greybeard then? Isn't it good that I understand the omission, now, when there is still time? No, at your age it's still not foolish to think of marriage. With your wealth you will win a good wife and make her happy, and if you do have children in your home, these later fruits will bring you great happiness,

unlike those that come from Heaven too soon, and become a burden and source of perplexity.'

"Having strengthened his resolve with this monologue, he sent for two members of his crew and told them his thoughts. Always ready and willing, they did not fail him now, and hurried into the city to discover the youngest and most beautiful girls; they were determined that their master, once he desired this new ware, should have the very best.

"He himself was no more idle than his deputies. He went out, asked questions, looked and listened, and soon found what he sought in a young woman who currently deserved to be called the most beautiful in the whole city. She was about sixteen, handsome and well brought up; her figure and manner seemed most attractive and promising.

"After a brief negotiation, which secured her a most advantageous position during the lifetime and after the death of her husband, the wedding was celebrated with great pomp and gaiety, and from this day on our merchant felt himself in true possession and enjoyment of his wealth for the first time. Now he joyfully used his finest and richest fabrics to clothe the beautiful body; the jewels shone far more brightly on the breast and in the hair of his beloved than in the jewel case, and his rings gained inestimable value from the hand that wore them.

"So he felt not merely as rich as before, but even richer, for his goods seemed to increase with sharing and use. In this way the couple lived for almost a year in the greatest contentment, and he seemed to have entirely exchanged his love of activity and wandering for the enjoyment of domestic bliss. But it is not easy to give up an old habit, and although we can be temporarily diverted from a course we embarked on when young, we can never leave it altogether.

"So our merchant often felt the stirrings of his old passion when he saw others boarding ship or returning happily to port. Even at home with his wife he frequently felt restless and dissatisfied. This desire increased with time and finally grew into such yearning that he became extremely unhappy and at last really ill.

"'What will become of you now?' he said to himself. 'Now you've discovered how foolish it is to exchange late in life an old way for a new one. How can we drive what we've always done and struggled for out of our thoughts, out of our very bones? And look what's happening to me, who always loved water like a fish and the open air like a bird, now that I've shut myself up with all my treasures and with the flower of all riches, a beautiful young woman? I'd hoped to find contentment and enjoy my possessions; instead I seem to be losing everything by not adding any more. It's wrong to call people fools who work with restless activity to heap goods upon goods, for activity is happiness, and to those who can experience the joys of unrelenting effort, the

wealth they earn has no significance. I'm growing wretched from lack of activity, sick from lack of exercise, and if I don't decide on something, I'll soon be almost dead.

“ ‘Of course it is a risky undertaking to part from a young, charming wife. Is it fair to court an attractive and susceptible girl, and then leave her to herself, to boredom, to her sensations and her longings? Aren't there sleek young men already strolling up and down before my windows? Aren't they already trying, in church and in the parks, to catch my wife's attention? And when I am gone? Shall I believe that my wife might be saved by a miracle? No, at her age, with her constitution, it would be silly to hope that she could refrain from the joys of love. If you go away, on your return you will have lost your wife's love and her fidelity, along with the honor of your house.’

“Such considerations and doubts, with which he tortured himself for a while, made his condition much worse. His wife, his relatives, and his friends worried about him but could not discover the cause of his illness. Finally he again took counsel with himself and after some thought exclaimed: ‘You fool! You're driving yourself mad trying to keep a wife whom, if your problem persists, you'll have left behind you for some other man anyway. Doesn't it at least make more sense to try to stay alive, even at the risk of losing that in her which is considered woman's most valuable possession? How many men can't prevent the loss of this treasure even by their presence, and patiently do without what they cannot preserve! Why shouldn't you have the courage to renounce such a thing, since your life depends on this decision?’

“With these words he took heart and summoned his crew. He ordered them to load up a vessel as usual and to have everything ready, so that they could be off at the first favorable wind. Then he explained to his wife as follows:

“ ‘Do not be concerned if you see a bustle from which you might conclude that I am planning to leave. Do not be distressed if I confess that I am planning to undertake another sea voyage. My love for you is still the same and will certainly remain so throughout my life. I know the value of the happiness I have till now enjoyed at your side, and I would enjoy it still more if I did not often have to reproach myself in secret for laziness and inactivity. My old habits are reviving, and my old life lures me once more. Let me see the market of Alexandria again; I will visit it now even more eagerly because I plan to get the most precious fabrics and the finest treasures there for you. I will leave you in possession of all my goods and my entire fortune; use it and enjoy yourself with your parents and family! The time of separation will also pass, and we shall meet again with joy.’

"Not without tears did the dear woman make him the tenderest reproaches, assuring him that she would not pass one happy hour without him; and, since she neither could nor would restrain him, she begged only that he remember her always, even in his absence.

"After he had discussed various matters and domestic affairs with her, he said, after a brief pause: 'There is one more thing which you must allow me to talk about freely; only I beg you please not to misinterpret what I say, but even in this concern to recognize my love for you.'

" 'I can already guess,' replied the lady. 'You are worried about me, because like all men you think our sex is unalterably weak. You have known me only to be young and gay, so now you think that in your absence I will be careless and led astray. I don't reproach you for this attitude; it's normal for you men. But as I know my own heart, I can assure you that nothing shall make an impression on me so easily, and that no impression can possibly be so deep as to tempt me from the path of love and duty that I have walked thus far. Have no fear; you will find your wife as tender and faithful at your return as you used to find her of an evening when you returned to my arms after a brief absence.'

" 'I believe that you mean this,' her husband answered, 'and hope you will persist. But let us consider the extreme case; why shouldn't we be prepared for that as well? You know how much your beauty and figure attract the gaze of our young fellow-townsmen. In my absence they will be after you even more than before; they will try everything to approach and to please you. The image of your husband will not always chase them from your door and from your heart, as his presence does now. You are a good and noble child, but the demands of nature are just and powerful; they are in constant conflict with reason, and usually carry off the victory. Don't interrupt me! You will certainly, in my absence, dutifully though you remember me, feel the desire whereby woman attracts man and is attracted by him. I will remain for a time the object of your desires; but who knows what circumstances, what opportunities may arise—and another man will reap in reality what imagination had intended for me. Don't be impatient; I beg you, hear me out!

" 'Should it come to pass—that which you think impossible and which I certainly do not wish to encourage—that you can no longer do without a man's company nor forego the joys of love, then promise me only not to choose in my place one of those thoughtless boys who, handsome though they may be, are more dangerous to a woman's honor, even, than to her virtue. Ruled more by vanity than by desire, they chase after any woman, and think nothing more natural than to sacrifice one for the next. If you feel like looking for a lover, look for

one who deserves the name, one who can modestly and discreetly enhance the joys of love by the virtue of secrecy.'

"At this the beautiful woman hid her sorrow no longer, and her tears, which she had held back until now, flowed freely from her eyes. 'Whatever you may think of me,' she cried after a passionate embrace, 'nothing could be further from my thoughts than this crime that you apparently consider inevitable. If I ever so much as dream of such a thing, may the earth open and swallow me up, and may all hope of that bliss be snatched from me, which promises us such a joyous continuation of our existence. Lay aside your mistrust and leave me my pure virtuous hope that I will soon see you in my arms again!'

"After he had tried to calm his wife in every possible way, he set sail the next morning. His journey prospered and he soon reached Alexandria.

"Meanwhile his wife lived in tranquil possession of a large fortune with every pleasure and comfort, but in seclusion, seeing no one but her parents and relations; and while her husband's business was carried on by faithful servants, she lived in a great mansion in whose splendid rooms she daily renewed with pleasure the memory of her spouse.

"But however quiet and secluded the life she led, the young men of the city had not remained idle. They did not fail to pass frequently before her window and tried in the evening to attract her attention with music and song. At first the lonely beauty found these attentions disagreeable and annoying, but she soon grew used to them, and in the long evenings allowed herself to enjoy the serenades as a pleasant entertainment without worrying about where they came from. At the same time she could not help sighing for her absent loved one.

"Instead of gradually growing weary, as she had hoped, her unknown admirers seemed to increase their efforts and make them permanent. She could already distinguish the recurring instruments and voices, the repeated melodies, and soon could no longer resist the curiosity to know who the unknown men might be, and especially who were the most persistent. She could surely—as a pastime—allow herself such interest.

"So she began, from time to time, to look through her curtains and shutters out onto the street to see who was passing, and especially to note the men who gazed at her windows the longest. They were mostly handsome and well-dressed young people, who revealed in their gestures, however, as in their whole outward appearance, as much frivolity as vanity. In their attentions to her house they seemed more concerned to draw notice to themselves than to show devotion to her.

" 'Truly,' the lady sometimes said to herself jokingly, 'my husband knew what he was doing! With the condition under which he permits me a lover, he excludes everyone who is after me and who might appeal

to me. He knows well that prudence, modesty, and discretion are qualities of maturity, qualities that our reason may value, but that have no capacity to stir our imagination or excite our affection. From these men who besiege my house with compliments I am safe, because they can awaken no trust; and those to whom I could give my trust, I find not the least bit appealing.'

"In the security of these thoughts she allowed herself more and more to enjoy the music and the appearance of the young men passing by, and without her noticing it there gradually grew a restless longing in her breast that she did not think to resist until it was too late. Loneliness and idleness, comfortable, easy, and rich living were a breeding-ground in which wayward desire could develop faster than the good child realized.

"Now she began, though with secret sighs, to admire, among her husband's other merits, his knowledge of the world and of human nature, and especially his knowledge of a woman's heart. 'So, it was possible after all, what I so vehemently denied,' she said to herself, 'and it really was necessary for me to be warned to be cautious and prudent in such a case! But what use are caution and prudence, when pitiless chance seems only to toy with a vague desire! How am I to choose a man I do not know? And once we are better acquainted, is there any choice left?'

"With such thoughts and a hundred others the lovely woman aggravated the malady, which had already spread far enough. In vain she tried to distract herself; every pleasant object excited her emotions, and even in the deepest solitude her emotions evoked pleasurable images in her imagination.

"Such was her state when her relatives told her, along with other gossip of the city, that a young lawyer who had been studying in Bologna had just returned to his native city. They could not say enough in his praise. With all his extraordinary knowledge he displayed a prudence and skill uncommon in young men, and with a very attractive appearance showed the greatest modesty. As an attorney he had soon won the confidence of the townspeople and the respect of the judges. Every day he appeared at the courthouse in order to see to his affairs and to further them.

"The fair one heard the description of such a perfect man not without desiring to meet him, and not without secretly wishing to find in him the man to whom she could give her heart according to her husband's own precept. How attentive she was, therefore, when she heard that he passed by her house daily; and how carefully she noted the hour when lawyers customarily assembled at the courthouse! Not without emotion did she finally see him pass, and although his handsome looks

and his youth of necessity charmed her, it was his modesty, on the other hand, that caused her anxiety.

"For several days she had secretly observed him and could now no longer resist the desire to attract his attention. She dressed with care, stepped onto the balcony, and her heart pounded when she saw him come along the street. But how distressed, indeed ashamed, she was, when he passed as usual with measured pace, sunk in reflection and with downcast eyes, and continued on his way with the utmost propriety, without even noticing her.

"Vainly she tried several days in a row to gain his attention in the same way. Always he proceeded at his usual pace, without raising his eyes or looking to either side. The more she observed him, however, the more he seemed to her the very man she so needed. Her liking became more intense with each day, and was finally, as she did not resist it, utterly overwhelming. 'What!' she said to herself, 'after your noble, sensible husband foresaw your state in his absence, and now that his prediction has come true that you can't live without a friend and favorite, must you languish and pine away when fortune has shown you a young man—just to your taste, just to the taste of your husband—with whom you could savor the joys of love in impenetrable secrecy? It is foolish to let opportunity slip, foolish to resist overpowering love!' With these and many other thoughts she tried to stiffen her resolve, and only briefly did she toss about in uncertainty. Then finally, as often happens, a passion we have long resisted carries us suddenly away, and so enflames us that we scornfully dismiss as trifling all concern and fear, reserve and shame, circumstances and obligations. So all of a sudden she rashly resolved to send her young serving maid to the beloved man and, regardless of the cost, to have him.

"The girl hurried off, found him sitting at dinner with several friends, and punctually delivered the message as her mistress had instructed her. The young lawyer was not surprised at this message. He had known the merchant in his youth; he knew him to be away at present; and although he had heard only vaguely about his marriage, he surmised that in her husband's absence the wife probably required legal assistance in some important business matter. Thus he answered the girl most courteously, and promised that as soon as the meal was over he would wait upon her mistress without delay. With inexpressible joy the lady heard that she was soon to see and speak to her beloved. She hastened to dress in her best clothes and had her house and apartments quickly arranged as neatly as possible. Orange leaves and flowers were strewn, the sofa covered with the most exquisite tapestries. So the brief period of waiting passed busily, which would otherwise have dragged unbearably.

"With what emotion did she advance to meet him when at last he arrived, in what confusion, as she sank down upon the couch, did she bid him sit upon an ottoman right beside it! She was struck dumb in the presence of what she had so desired; she had not considered what she would say to him. He too was silent and sat modestly before her. Finally she took courage and said, not without anxiety and constraint:

" 'Sir, you've returned to your native city only recently, and already you are known everywhere as a talented and reliable man. I, too, am placing my trust in you, in an important and peculiar situation which, as I think about it, is perhaps more appropriate to a confessor than a legal adviser. For a year I have been married to an honorable and wealthy man, who, as long as we lived together, treated me with the greatest consideration; and I would have no complaints about him, if a restless desire to travel and trade had not some time ago torn him from my arms.

" 'Being a sensible and fair man, he realized the injustice he did me by going away. He understood that a young woman could not be stored like jewels and pearls; he knew rather that she resembled a garden full of beautiful fruit, which would be lost for everyone as well as for the master, if he stubbornly chose to lock its gates for several years. Before his departure, therefore, he spoke to me very seriously. He assured me that I would not be able to live without a lover; he not only gave me permission, but he urged me, and made me promise to follow the inclination that would develop in my heart freely and without reservation.'

"She paused for a moment, but soon an expressive look from the young man gave her courage enough to continue her confession:

" 'My husband placed only one restriction on his otherwise so generous permission. He recommended extreme caution, and explicitly required that I choose a sober, reliable, prudent, and discreet friend. Spare me from saying the rest, sir; spare me the embarrassment of confessing how much I am taken with you, and divine from this confidence my hopes and my desires.'

"After a short pause the amiable young man replied thoughtfully: 'I am indeed indebted to you for the trust with which you grant me such great honor and happiness! I long only to convince you that I am not unworthy of it. Let me answer you first as a jurist: as such, I confess that I admire your husband, who so clearly felt and understood his injustice, for it is certain, that any man who leaves a young wife to visit faraway lands must be regarded as one who completely abandons any other possession; by his actions he clearly renounces all claim to it. Just as the first comer may lawfully claim any such abandoned article, so I must regard it as even more natural and just for a young woman, under the same circumstances, to bestow her affection anew

and to entrust herself without hesitation to a lover who seems pleasant and reliable.

“‘And if you have a case like this, where the husband himself, conscious of his injustice, explicitly permits to his abandoned wife what he cannot refuse her, then no doubt remains whatever, since no one suffers an injustice, if he has declared himself willing to bear it.

“‘If you now,’ the young man continued with completely different looks and in the most passionate tone, as he took his lovely mistress by the hand, ‘if you choose me as your servant, you acquaint me with a blessedness I never before dreamed of. Rest assured,’ he exclaimed, kissing her hand, ‘that you could not have found a more devoted, tender, faithful, and discreet servant!’

“How reassured she felt after this declaration. She did not hesitate to show him the most ardent evidence of her tenderness: she pressed his hands, nestled close to him, and laid her head upon his shoulder. They had not been very long in this position when he gently tried to withdraw from her and, not without distress, began: ‘Could anyone be in a more peculiar situation? I am forced to withdraw from you and to exercise the greatest self-control, just when I should abandon myself to feelings of rapture. I may not at the moment take possession of the happiness that awaits me in your arms. Ah, if only the delay does not cheat me of my fondest hopes!’

“The beauty asked anxiously after the cause of this strange utterance.

“‘Just as I was completing my studies in Bologna,’ he replied, ‘and was driving myself hardest to prepare for my future calling, I fell into a grave illness, which threatened to destroy if not my life, at least my physical and mental powers. In the extreme of distress and pain I swore an oath to the Mother of God, that if she would let me recover, I would spend a year in strict fasting and abstain from all enjoyment of whatever kind. For ten months now I have kept my oath to the letter, and considering the great benefit I received, the time did not drag, since it was not hard for me to go without many habitual and familiar pleasures. But what an eternity have the two remaining months suddenly become to me, since a happiness that exceeds all conception can be mine only when they are past! Do not lose patience, and do not take back the favor you have so generously intended!’

“The lady, not especially pleased with this explanation, took heart once again when her friend, after some reflection, continued: ‘I would hardly dare suggest to you the means by which I can be released earlier from my oath. If I were to find someone who would undertake to keep my vow as strictly and dependably as I do, and who would share half the remaining time with me, I would be free that much faster, and then nothing would interfere with our wishes. Would you not, my sweet friend, in order to hasten our happiness, be willing to remove

part of the obstacle that stands in our way? I can transfer my vow only to someone completely reliable. It's strict, for I may eat daily only two meals of bread and water, and at night I may spend only a few hours on a hard bed, and despite my many duties I must say a great number of prayers. If, as happened today, I cannot avoid attending a banquet, I may not ignore my obligation on that account; instead I must try to resist all the enticing delicacies passed before me. If you can also resolve to observe all these rules for one month, then you will take greater pleasure in the possession of a lover, since you will have earned it yourself, so to speak, by such a praiseworthy undertaking.'

"The beautiful lady was not happy to hear of the obstacles opposing her passion; but her love for the young man had been so increased by his presence, that no trial seemed too hard to her, if only her possession of so precious a treasure could be thus assured. She said to him, therefore, in her sweetest tones: 'My darling friend! The miracle by which you recovered your health is so precious and venerable, that I make it my duty and my joy to take part in the vow that you are obliged to fulfill in return. I am glad to give you such a clear proof of my affection; I shall follow your instructions to the letter, and until you release me nothing shall deflect me from the course you set.'

"After the young man had settled in detail with her the conditions under which she could spare him half his vow, he departed, promising that soon he would visit her again and see if she was successfully persisting in her resolve. And so she had to let him go without a handclasp, without a kiss, and with scarcely a significant glance as he departed. The activity to which her odd resolution had committed her made her happy; and she had much to do to change her whole way of life. First all the beautiful leaves and flowers that she had strewn to welcome him were swept out; then, in place of the well-upholstered couch came a hard bed, where she lay down in the evening, for the first time in her life barely satisfied by a meal of only water and bread. The next day she was busy cutting out and sewing shirts, of which she had promised to make a certain number for a hospital and poorhouse. During this new and disagreeable task she occupied her imagination with visions of her attractive lover and with the hope of future rapture, and with these thoughts her meagre fare seemed to grant her heart-strengthening nourishment.

"So a week passed and by its end the roses in her cheeks were already beginning to fade somewhat. Gowns that once had fitted her well were too loose, and her once brisk and nimble limbs had grown languid and weak, by the time that her friend appeared again and infused her with new strength and vitality. He exhorted her to persist in her resolve,

encouraged her by his example and hinted at uninterrupted enjoyment to come. He stayed only briefly and promised to return soon.

"The charitable work resumed with renewed vigor and the strict diet was in no way relaxed. But, unfortunately, she could not have been more depleted by a major illness. Her friend, who visited her again at the end of the week, looked at her with the greatest compassion and strengthened her with the thought that the trial was already half over.

"Now, the unaccustomed fasting, prayer, and work became more burdensome to her every day, and the excessive abstinence seemed to undermine completely the health of a body accustomed to rest and generous nourishment. She was finally no longer able to stand up, and was driven, despite the warmth of the season, to wrap herself in two and three layers of clothing in order to retain at least the last residue of body heat. Indeed, she was no longer able to sit upright, and finally was forced to stay in bed.

"To what reflections was she reduced by her state! How often did this peculiar situation pass before her soul and how it pained her when ten days passed without an appearance by the lover who cost her such extreme sacrifices! And yet these dark hours prepared for her full recovery, indeed brought it about. For when, soon after, her lover appeared and sat down by her bed on the very same ottoman where he had listened to her first declaration, and warmly, even rather tenderly, urged her to endure staunchly the brief time that remained, she interrupted him with a smile and said: 'No further persuasion is needed, my worthy friend, and I will keep my vow patiently for the few remaining days, in the conviction that you imposed it for my own good. I am now too weak to express to you the gratitude I feel. You have saved me for myself; you have restored me to myself, and I realize that from now on I owe my whole existence to you.

" 'In truth my husband was clever and prudent and knew a woman's heart; he was fair enough not to scold for an inclination that might arise in her bosom through his fault; indeed, he was generous enough to place his rights second to the demands of nature. But you, sir, *you* are rational and good; you have made me feel that besides inclination there is something else in us that can hold it in balance, that we are capable of renouncing every habitual pleasure and even of rejecting our most ardent desires. You have taught me this lesson by error and hope; but both cease to be necessary, once we have become acquainted with the good and mighty self, which dwells so still and quiet within us and which, until it gains mastery in the house, at least makes its presence known by constant gentle reminders. Farewell! Henceforth your friend will watch you with pleasure. Influence your fellows as you have done me; do not just unravel the perplexities that only too easily arise over property, but show them, too, by your gentle guidance and

example, that in every breast the power of virtue sprouts secretly. The respect of all will be your reward, and you, more than the most distinguished statesman and the greatest hero, will deserve the title father of his country.' ”

“I have to praise your ‘Lawyer,’ ” said the Baroness. “He is neat, rational, entertaining, and instructive; so should all men be who want to hold us back, or help us recover, from some mistake. Really this tale deserves, before many others, that title of honor, moral tale. Give us more of this kind, and we shall certainly appreciate it.”

OLD MAN. “If this story meets your approval, then I am indeed delighted, but I am sorry if you want still more moral tales; for this one is the first and the last.”

LOUISA. “It does you little credit that in your collection you have only one story of precisely the best kind.”

OLD MAN. “You misunderstand me. This is not the only moral tale I can tell; but they all resemble one another so closely that one always seems to be telling the same one.”

LOUISA. “You really ought to give up these paradoxes once and for all; they only confuse the conversation. Explain yourself more clearly!”

OLD MAN. “Gladly! Only that story deserves to be called moral which shows us that man has in himself the power to act against his inclination from the conviction of what is right. This is what this story teaches us, and no moral tale can teach anything else.”

LOUISA. “And so, in order to act morally, I must act against my inclination?”

OLD MAN. “Yes.”

LOUISA. “Even if it is good?”

OLD MAN. “No inclination is good in itself, but only insofar as it results in something good.”

LOUISA. “Suppose someone had an inclination to charity?”

OLD MAN. “Then he should forbid himself to be charitable, as soon as he sees that he is ruining his own household by it.”

LOUISA. “And if someone had an irresistible drive to gratitude?”

OLD MAN. “Provision has already been made in the case of man that gratitude can never become a drive. But supposing it could, the man to value would be the one who preferred to show ingratitude rather than undertake something wicked out of love for his benefactor.”

LOUISA. “So then there could actually be innumerable moral tales?”

OLD MAN. “In that sense, yes, but none of them would say anything beyond what my lawyer said, and therefore you can call it unique in terms of spirit, since you’re right that the subject matter can vary greatly.”

LOUISA. "If you had expressed yourself more clearly we wouldn't have quarreled."

OLD MAN. "Nor spoken either. Mistakes and misunderstandings are the wellsprings of active life, and of conversation."

LOUISA. "I still cannot agree with you completely. When a brave man rescues others at the risk of his own life, is that not a moral action?"

OLD MAN. "In my way of speaking, no. But if a timid person overcomes his fear and does the same, then it is a moral action."

BARONESS. "I would prefer, my dear friend, that you gave us a few more examples, and came to terms with Louisa about the theory another time. It is true, a heart that tends to the good is, when we become aware of it, bound to delight us; but there is nothing in the world more beautiful than inclination guided by reason and conscience. If you have another story like this, we would like to hear it. I especially love parallel stories. One illuminates the other and explains its meaning better than many dry words."

OLD MAN. "I can probably tell a few more that belong here; I have always been particularly interested in these qualities of the human spirit."

LOUISA. "There is only one thing I would like to request. I can't deny that I don't like stories that always drag our imaginations to foreign lands. Must everything take place in Italy and Sicily, or in the Orient? Are Naples, Palermo, and Smyrna the only places where anything interesting can happen? Fairy tales must be set in Ormus and Samarkand just to confuse our imaginations. But if you want to cultivate our minds, our hearts, give us local settings, give us family portraits; then we will recognize ourselves all the more readily and, when they seem accurate, beat our breasts with that much more emotion."

OLD MAN. "In this too you shall be obliged. But family portraits are peculiar things. They all look so alike, and we have already seen virtually every aspect of them well presented on the stage. All the same, I will take a chance and tell a story that is similar to something you already know about, and that might prove novel and interesting only in its precise depiction of emotional developments."

"In families it is often possible to observe that with regard to both mind and body children inherit sometimes from their father, sometimes from their mother; and so it often happens that a child combines the natures of both parents in a special and remarkable way."

"Of this a young man whom I shall call Ferdinand was striking proof. His physical appearance resembled that of both parents, and their temperaments could be precisely distinguished in his own. He had the gay and carefree disposition of his father, as also his tendency to live

for the moment, and a certain impetuous way, on many occasions, of considering only himself. But from his mother, it seemed, came calm deliberation, a sense of justice and fairness, and a nascent capacity to sacrifice himself for others. It is easy to see why those who dealt with him, in order to explain his actions, often had to resort to the hypothesis that the young man must have two souls.

"I will skip over many scenes from his childhood and relate only one occurrence that illuminates his whole character and that marked a distinct epoch in his life.

"From childhood on he had enjoyed every comfort, for his parents were well-off, and lived and raised their children as people of their station ought to; and if his father spent more than was proper on parties, gambling, and fancy clothes, nevertheless his mother, as a thrifty housewife, knew how to limit their ordinary expenses, so that overall a balance was maintained and no shortage could ever develop. Moreover, the father prospered in business; a number of his riskier speculations succeeded, and because he liked being with people, he also had the benefit of many contacts and considerable assistance.

"Children, as developing personalities, usually take as a model whoever in the family seems to enjoy life most. In a father who knows how to have a good time they see the decisive rule for their own behavior, and, because they reach this conclusion so young, their appetites and desires usually develop out of all proportion to the resources of their families. They are constantly frustrated, the more so because each new generation makes new demands, and makes them at an ever younger age, whereas the parents normally would like to allow their children only what they themselves enjoyed at an earlier period, when everyone was content to live more modestly and simply.

"Ferdinand grew up with the unpleasant feeling that he often lacked what his playmates had. In clothing, and in a certain liberality of life and manner, he wished to stand second to none. He wanted to be like his father, whose example he saw daily before him and who appeared a model twice over: once because he was a father, whom a son is usually predisposed to favor; and then again, because the boy saw that the man lived a pleasant and enjoyable life, and at the same time was esteemed and loved by everyone. On this account Ferdinand had, as one might imagine, many quarrels with his mother, since he didn't want to wear his father's cast-off coats, but always wanted to be in fashion himself. So he grew, and his demands always grew a little ahead of him, with the result that at last, by the time he was eighteen, he had indeed completely lost touch with his circumstances.

"So far he had made no debts, because his mother had instilled in him an intense horror of them, had tried to preserve his confidence, and several times had gone to extreme lengths to grant his wishes or

to rescue him from small embarrassments. Unfortunately, at the very time when, as a young man, he was more concerned with externals, when, because he was attracted to a very pretty girl, he became more involved in society and wished not merely to equal others, but to excel and to please—just at this moment she had to be tighter in her management than ever. Instead of satisfying his demands as before, she began to appeal to his reason, to his good heart, to his love for her; and because she convinced him without changing him, she truly reduced him to despair.

“He could not, without giving up what was as dear to him as his own life, change the circumstances in which he found himself. From earliest childhood on he had been growing toward this situation, becoming entwined with everything that surrounded him; he could not cut a single fiber of his relationships, parties, rambles, and excursions without also offending an old school friend, a playmate, a new, distinguished acquaintance and, what was worst, his love.

“How highly he valued his love is easy to understand when one learns that it flattered simultaneously his senses, his mind, his vanity, and his warmest hopes. One of the most beautiful, attractive, and wealthy girls in the city preferred him, at least for the moment, to his many fellow suitors. She allowed him to flaunt, so to speak, the service he devoted to her, and they seemed mutually proud of the chains with which they had bound one another. Now it was his duty to dance attendance upon her, to spend time and money in her service, and to show in every way how much he valued her love, how he had to possess her.

“Such companionship and such an endeavor cost Ferdinand more than would have been natural in other circumstances. She had actually been entrusted by her absent parents to the care of a rather eccentric aunt, and it took all kinds of stratagems and unusual arrangements to bring Otilie, this ornament of society, into society. Ferdinand exhausted himself inventing ways to provide her the pleasure that she so much enjoyed and that she knew how to enhance for everyone around her.

“And at just this moment to be summoned by a loved and venerated mother to completely different obligations, to expect no help from her, to have such horror of debts, which would not have maintained his situation long in any case, to be regarded by everyone as well-off and generous and yet to experience daily urgent need of money, was surely one of the most painful situations in which a young temperament stirred by passion can be.

“Certain ideas, which had otherwise only flitted by, now held his attention; certain thoughts, which had troubled him only in passing, now lingered in his mind; and certain resentful feelings became more

persistent and more bitter. If once he had taken his father as his model, now he envied him as his rival. Everything that the son desired, the father possessed; everything that caused the son anxiety, the father acquired with ease. Moreover, it was not as if it was a matter of necessities, but rather, of what both might well have given up. Thus the son felt that his father should sometimes go without, so that *he* might enjoy. But the father had entirely different views; he was the kind of man who is liberal with himself and who, as a result, deprives his dependents. He had set his son a fixed allowance and demanded from him an exact accounting, indeed a regular tabulation.

"Nothing sharpens people's eyes more than restrictions. This is why women are so much cleverer than men, and why subordinates so carefully watch superiors who do not practice what they preach. So the son carefully watched all his father's actions, especially those that involved spending money. He listened more carefully when he heard that his father had lost or won at gambling; he judged him more severely when the latter arbitrarily allowed himself something expensive.

" 'Isn't it strange,' he said to himself, 'that while parents stuff themselves with pleasure of every sort, spending at whim a fortune given them by chance, they exclude their children from every reasonable pleasure just at the age when we are most responsive to it! And what right have they to do it? And how did they get this right? Should it depend on chance alone, and can there be a right, where chance is at work? If my grandfather were still alive, who treated his grandchildren like his children, I would be much better off. He would not let me want for necessities: because isn't something a necessity, if we need it in the circumstances to which we were born and bred? Grandfather wouldn't let me live in want any more than he would tolerate my father's extravagance. If he had lived longer, if he had understood that his grandson also deserves some pleasure, then he would perhaps in his will have provided sooner for my happiness. I've even heard that my grandfather died unexpectedly, just as he was about to make his will, and so perhaps only chance has deprived me of my earlier share in a fortune that, if my father goes on spending like this, I may well lose forever.'

"These and other sophistries about ownership and justice—whether one had to obey a law or arrangement to which one had not consented, and to what extent a person might privately violate the laws of society—these occupied him often in those lonely, morose hours when, for lack of ready money, he had to decline an excursion or some other pleasant event. For he had already sold off the small things of value that he owned, and his usual allowance was certainly not sufficient.

"He withdrew, and one can say that at such moments he had no respect for his mother, who could not help him, and hated his father, who, in his opinion, constantly obstructed him.

“Just at that period he made a discovery that irritated him even more. He perceived that his father was not only a poor manager, but also a careless one. For he often took money from his desk in haste, without recording it, and later would sometimes recount and calculate, and seem annoyed that the sums did not tally with the cash box. The son noticed this several times, and was even more sensitive about it if, at the moment when his father was dipping into the till, he himself was distinctly short of cash.

“While he was in this mood there occurred a strange accident, which gave him an attractive opportunity to act on what had been only an obscure and indeterminate urge.

“His father gave him the task of looking through a crate of old letters and sorting them. One Sunday, when he was alone, he was carrying the box through the room that housed the desk where his father kept his money. The crate was heavy; he had not grasped it properly and wanted to put it down for a moment or, actually, to rest it on something. Unable to hold it, he banged into the corner of the desk, and its top flew open. He saw now lying before him all the rolls of money at which he had often cast a furtive glance, set down his box, and took, without thinking and without reflecting, a roll from the side where his father generally seemed to take the money for impulse purchases. He closed the desk again and tried hitting it: the top flew open every time, and it was as good as having the key to the desk.

“Impetuously he sought again every pleasure that until now he had had to give up. He played the swain with more energy; in all his undertakings he was more passionate; his vivacity and grace had turned into an almost wild impetuosity which, to be sure, did not suit him badly, but brought no one any good.

“What a spark is to a loaded gun, opportunity is to impulse, and every impulse that we satisfy against our conscience forces us to expend an excess of physical energy; we behave again as savages, and it is difficult to hide the outward effects of this exertion.

“The more his inner sensibility opposed him, the more specious arguments Ferdinand accumulated; and he seemed to act that much more boldly and freely, the more constrained he felt within.

“At this same time all sorts of trinkets of no real worth had come into fashion. Otilie loved to wear jewelry; he looked for a way to supply it so that Otilie herself would not actually know where the presents came from. Her suspicions fell upon an old uncle, and Ferdinand was doubly delighted when she expressed her pleasure at the gifts and her suspicions of the uncle at the same time.

“But to give himself and her this pleasure, he had to open his father’s desk several more times, and he did so with rather less concern, because

his father had on various occasions inserted or withdrawn money without recording it.

"Shortly afterwards Otilie was to visit her parents for several months. The young people were very distressed at the prospect of parting, and one circumstance made their separation even more significant. Otilie learned by accident that the gifts were from Ferdinand; she confronted him, and when he confessed, seemed very annoyed. She insisted that he take them back; and this demand pained him bitterly. He declared that he was neither able nor willing to live without her; he begged her to preserve her love for him, and implored her not to refuse him her hand as soon as he should be provided for and have a proper home. She loved him, she was touched, she consented to his wishes, and, in this happy moment, they sealed their promise with ardent embraces and a thousand heartfelt kisses.

"After her departure, Ferdinand felt very lonely. The company in which he had been accustomed to see her held no charm for him, now that she was absent. He continued only from force of habit to visit either friends or entertainments, and dipped only reluctantly a few more times into his father's till to defray expenses to which no passion compelled him. He was often alone, and his good soul seemed to gain the upper hand. He was amazed at himself, upon quiet reflection, that he could ever have devised those cold and distorted sophistries about justice and ownership, about claims on the property of others, and all the rest, in order to extenuate unacceptable conduct. It gradually became clear to him that only fidelity and faith make men worthy of esteem, and that the good man must actually live so as to put all laws to shame, even though another might either evade them or exploit them to his own disadvantage.

"In the meantime, before these true and good principles became completely clear to him and led to firm resolutions, he yielded yet a few more times to the temptation, in pressing cases, to tap the forbidden source. But he never did so without repugnance, and only as if an evil spirit were dragging him by the hair.

"Finally he took heart and resolved, before all else, to make the deed impossible and inform his father about the condition of the lock. He did this with cunning: he carried the box of now-sorted letters through the room in his father's presence, deliberately banged into the desk, and his father was indeed amazed when he saw the lid fly up! They both examined the lock and found that the catches were worn with age and the hinges loose. At once everything was repaired, and Ferdinand had not had for a long time so pleasant a moment as when he saw the money in such safe custody.

"But this was not sufficient. He immediately decided to collect together the sum that he had purloined from his father and that he still

knew down to the penny, and, in one way or another, to return it. He began to live most frugally and to save as much of his allowance as was possible. To be sure, what he could recover this way was only a little, compared to what he had squandered before; nevertheless, the sum seemed great because it was the beginning of restitution for his wrong. And indeed, there is a vast difference between the last dollar one borrows and the first that one pays back.

"He had not pursued this virtuous course for long, when his father decided to send him on business affairs. He was to familiarize himself with a distant manufacturing arrangement. The plan was to establish an office of their own in an area where materials and labor were very cheap, settle a partner there, themselves earn the profits now lost to others, and with capital and credit, expand the business. Ferdinand was to investigate the situation on site and make a detailed report. His father allowed him money for travelling expenses and directed him to manage with it; the sum was generous and he had no cause to complain.

"Even on his journey Ferdinand lived frugally, calculated over and over, and found that if he continued to economize in every way, he could save one third of his travelling money. Moreover, he now hoped for an opportunity to attain the rest; and he found it. For opportunity is an indifferent goddess: she favors good as well as evil.

"In the district that he was to visit he found everything far more advantageous than anticipated. Everyone was proceeding mechanically in the same old rut. Either nothing was known of modern improvements, or none had been introduced. People invested only modest amounts, and were content with only modest profits; and he soon saw that with a certain amount of capital, with loans, with the wholesale purchase of raw materials, with the introduction of machinery under competent supervisors, they could establish a substantial and solid enterprise.

"He was elated at the thought of perhaps doing this himself. The magnificent countryside, where every moment the image of his beloved Ottilie hovered before him, made him wish that his father would assign him to this spot, entrust him with the new establishment, and thus make generous and unexpected provision for him.

"He observed everything more attentively because he already saw it as his own. For the first time he had an opportunity to use his knowledge, his intelligence, his judgment. Both the countryside and his affairs absorbed his interest. They were balm and healing for his wounded heart; for it pained him to recall his father's house where, as if in a kind of madness, he had been able to commit an act that now seemed to him the rankest crime.

"A family friend, a fine man but in poor health, who himself had first suggested the idea of such an enterprise in his letters, was his constant companion, showed him everything, told him his ideas, and was delighted when the young man responded to and even anticipated him. This man led a very simple life, partly by inclination, partly because his health required it. He had no children, but was cared for by a niece, to whom he intended to leave his fortune, and for whom he desired a worthy, enterprising husband. With the support of additional capital and fresh energy he hoped to see executed the idea he had conceived, but which his physical and economic circumstances prevented him from achieving himself.

"Scarcely had he set eyes on Ferdinand than the latter seemed to him just the man, and his hopes grew as he saw the young man's devotion to business and to the region. He let his niece see his thoughts, and she did not seem averse. She was a young, attractive, healthy girl, good-natured in every way. Caring for her uncle's household kept her active and busy, concern for his health always tender and obliging. No one could have desired a more suitable person for a wife.

"Ferdinand, who could think only of the charm and the love of Otilie, overlooked the fine country girl, except perhaps to wish that if Otilie one day lived here as his wife, he might find such a housekeeper and manager to assist her. He responded to the girl's friendliness and kindness without reserve, learned to know her better and to value her; soon he treated her with more respect, and both she and her uncle interpreted his behavior according to their wishes.

"By now Ferdinand had taken a careful look and acquainted himself with all the details. With the help of the uncle he had drawn up a plan and, careless as always, did not conceal his intention to execute it himself. At the same time he had paid the niece many compliments and said how lucky was the household that could be entrusted to so careful a mistress. Hence she and her uncle believed that he had serious intentions, and treated him more cordially than ever.

"Not without satisfaction had Ferdinand learned in his investigations that he had in the future much to expect from this place, that he could also make a profitable deal right now, and that he could, as well, restore the purloined sum to his father and so at once free himself from this crushing burden. He revealed the intended speculation to his friend, who was extraordinarily pleased and gave him all possible assistance; in fact, he even wanted to supply his young friend everything on credit, which however the latter did not accept. Instead, he paid part immediately with the excess from his travel allowance, and promised to pay the rest in a reasonable time.

"The joy with which he had his merchandise packed and loaded was inexpressible; the satisfaction with which he set out for home can

be imagined. The most sublime feeling a person can have is when he overcomes and frees himself from a major fault, indeed from a crime, by his own effort. The good man who goes through life without noticeably departing from the proper path is like a peaceful, commendable citizen, but a man of the former type, on the other hand, deserves admiration and glory as a hero and conqueror. And this would seem to be the sense of the paradox that the Godhead itself rejoices more over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine just men.

"But unfortunately Ferdinand could not, by his good resolutions, by his amendment and restitution, erase the sad results of his deed that now awaited him and that were about to wound anew his recently comforted spirit. During his absence a storm had gathered that was to break immediately upon his arrival in his father's house.

"Ferdinand's father was, as we know, not especially orderly about his personal finances; his business affairs, however, were conducted with the greatest correctness by a skilled and punctilious associate. The old man had not actually noticed the money his son had pilfered, but unfortunately it had included a packet of coins, uncommon in the neighborhood, that he had won gambling with a foreigner. These he did miss, and the circumstance troubled him. But what upset him in the extreme was that there were missing several rolls of a hundred ducats each, which he had lent out some time ago but was certain had been repaid. He knew that until recently the desk had opened at a blow, concluded that he had been robbed, and completely lost his head. His suspicion fell on all and sundry. With the most fearful threats and imprecations he told his wife; he wanted to search every inch of the house, question all the servants, maids, and children; no one was proof against his suspicion. The good woman did her best to calm her husband. She pointed out the embarrassment and discredit this affair would bring upon him and his household if it became public: no one would care about their misfortune except to humiliate them with their sympathy; in such a case neither he nor she would be spared; people would be able to make even more farfetched remarks if nothing came out of it all; in any case they might be able to discover the thief and, without ruining him for the rest of his life, recover the money. With these and similar arguments she finally persuaded him to be calm and to pursue a quiet investigation.

"And unfortunately the discovery came soon enough. Ottilie's aunt was informed of the young people's promises to each other. She knew about the gifts that her niece had accepted. The entire situation displeased her, and she had kept silent only because her niece was away. A secure match with Ferdinand seemed advantageous to her, but an uncertain adventure was intolerable. So, since she heard that the young man would shortly return, and since she also expected her niece again

any day, she hastened to report what had happened to his parents and to hear their opinion about it, to ask whether to expect that Ferdinand would soon be provided for and whether they would consent to a marriage with her niece.

"The mother was not a little astonished, when she heard about these ties. She was horrified, when she learned what presents Ferdinand had given Otilie. She concealed her amazement, requested the aunt to allow her a little time to discuss the matter at leisure with her husband, assured her that she considered Otilie an advantageous match and that it was not impossible to make suitable provision for their son in the near future.

"When the aunt had departed, the mother did not think it advisable to confide this discovery to her husband. Her only concern was to clear up the unhappy mystery of whether Ferdinand had, as she feared, bought the gifts with the stolen money. She hastened to the dealer who specialized in jewelry of this sort, bargained for similar items, and finally told him he must not overcharge her, since he had let her son, for a similar order, have them for less. The tradesman insisted no, showed her the exact terms of sale, and added that it was also necessary to take account of the exchange on the currency in which Ferdinand had paid a part. He named, to her great distress, the currency; it was the one that the father was missing.

"After she had him write down, for the sake of appearances, his lowest prices, she left with heavy heart. Ferdinand's fault was too apparent, the sum that was missing was large, and she imagined, with her anxious disposition, the worst crime and the direst consequences. She had the good sense to conceal the discovery from her husband; she awaited her son's return, torn between fear and longing. She wished to know the truth, and feared to learn the worst.

"Finally he returned in high spirits. He could expect praise for his work, and at the same time secretly carried in his merchandise the ransom with which he planned to free himself from his secret crime.

"His father received his report well but not with as much applause as expected, because the affair of the money left him distracted and out of sorts, particularly since he had several large amounts to pay just then. His father's mood greatly oppressed him, still more the presence of the walls, the furnishings, the desk, which had been witnesses of his crime. All his joy was gone, his hopes and expectations; he felt he was a base, indeed a bad man.

"He was about to seek a quiet way to sell his goods, which were shortly to arrive, and by his activity extricate himself from his misery, when his mother drew him aside and charged him with his fault in grave and loving terms and left him not the slightest loophole for denial. His tender heart was wrung; in tears he cast himself at her feet,

confessed, begged forgiveness, swore that only his love for Ottilie could have led him astray and that no other vices had ever accompanied this one. Then he told the story of his repentance, that he had deliberately shown his father how the desk could be opened, and that from savings on his journey and from a successful speculation he was in a position to replace all the money.

“His mother, unable to yield so easily, insisted upon knowing what he had done with such large sums, for the presents involved only the tiniest fraction. She showed him, to his horror, an accounting of what his father was missing; he couldn’t take responsibility even for all of the silver, and he solemnly swore he had not touched any of the gold. At this his mother was enraged. She rebuked him, saying that at the very moment when he should be demonstrating his reform and conversion with sincere repentance, he was still trying to deceive his loving mother with denials, lies, and fairy tales. She knew well, she said, that anyone capable of the one theft was capable of all the rest. Probably he had accomplices among his dissolute companions, probably the deal he had transacted had been made with the stolen money, and doubtless he would never have mentioned it, if the crime had not accidentally come to light. She threatened him with his father’s anger, with legal penalties, with total banishment; but nothing hurt him more than when she hinted that there had just been discussion of a marriage to Ottilie. Deeply moved, she left him in a terrible state. He saw his fault revealed, saw himself suspected of a greater crime. How could he convince his parents that he had not touched the gold? Given his father’s violent temper, he had reason to fear public exposure; he saw himself the opposite of everything he might have been. His prospects for a useful life, for marriage to Ottilie, disappeared. He saw himself banished, a fugitive, and exposed in foreign lands to every privation.

“But even all this, which bewildered his mind, injured his pride, and insulted his love, was not the most painful aspect. Most deeply he was wounded by the thought that his sincere intention, his manly resolution, the plan he had pursued to repair the deed, should be completely misunderstood, completely rejected, and indeed interpreted as the very opposite. If those earlier thoughts reduced him to dark despair, since he had to admit that he deserved his fate, these others made the deepest impression, since he learned the sad truth that a bad deed has the capacity to ruin even good efforts. This communion with himself, this reflection that his noblest striving was to be in vain, weakened him; he no longer wished to live.

“In these moments his soul thirsted for higher assistance. He sank down at his prayer stool, which he wet with his tears, and demanded aid from the Divine Being. His prayer was worthy to be heard: that the person who overcomes sin on his own should have a claim upon

immediate help; that one who has left no powers unused should be able, when they are exhausted, when they are no longer sufficient, to call upon the aid of his Father in Heaven.

"In this conviction, in this urgent entreaty, he persisted for some time and scarcely noticed that his door opened and someone came in. It was his mother, who approached him with a cheerful face, saw his confusion, and addressed him with words of comfort. 'How happy I am,' she said, 'to find that at least you are no liar and that I can regard your repentance as genuine. The gold has turned up; your father, when he received it back from a friend, gave it to the cashier to keep for him and, distracted by the many activities of the day, forgot it. Your tally of the silver was reasonably close; now the missing sum is much less. I could not hide the joy in my heart, and promised your father to recover what is missing, if he would promise to compose himself and to ask no more questions.'

"Ferdinand became at once supremely happy. He hastened to complete his transaction, soon turned the money over to his mother, even replaced what he had not taken, since he knew that it was missing only due to his father's carelessness in spending. He was happy and calm, but this entire episode had made a very serious impression on him. He had convinced himself that man has the power to desire and achieve goodness; he now also believed that man could thereby win God's favor and count on His assistance, as he had just directly experienced. With great excitement he now told his father his plan to settle in the area he had visited. He laid out the arrangement in its full value and scope; his father was not opposed, and his mother privately revealed to her husband Ferdinand's relationship with Ottilie. He was pleased with such a fashionable daughter-in-law, and found the prospect of being able to provide for his son without cost quite agreeable."

"This story appeals to me," said Louisa, when the old man had concluded, "and even though it is taken from ordinary life, I do not find it commonplace. For if we examine ourselves and observe others, we find that we are rarely moved on our own to renounce some wish or other; mostly it is external circumstances that compel us."

"I wish," said Carl, "that we never had to deny ourselves anything, but instead that we didn't even know about what we were not to possess. Unfortunately, in our way of life everything crowds in on us, every inch is planted, all the trees are heavy with fruit, and we are just supposed to go past underneath, settle for the shadow, and renounce the best part."

"Now," said Louisa to the old man, "let us hear the rest of your story!"

OLD MAN. "It is really already over."

LOUISA. "Of course, we've heard the development, but now we'd also like to hear the end."

OLD MAN. "You're right in your distinction, and since you take an interest in my friend's fate, I will tell you briefly what became of him."

"Freed from the oppressive burden of such an ugly crime, not without a certain self-satisfaction, he now thought about his future happiness and yearned for Ottilie's return, so that he could declare himself and redeem his promise to the full extent. She arrived in company with her parents; he hastened to her, he found her more beautiful and gay than ever. Impatiently he awaited the moment when he could speak to her alone and lay out his prospects before her. The hour came, and with all the joy and tenderness of love he told her of his hopes, the nearness of his happiness, and his wish to share it with her. But how amazed, indeed dismayed, he was when she listened to the whole affair with indifference, indeed, one might almost say, contempt. She joked less than politely about the hermitage he had picked out, and about the fine figure they both would cut as shepherd and shepherdess huddling under a straw roof, and other things of that sort.

"Shaken and embittered he withdrew; her behavior had upset him, and for a moment he turned cold. She had been unjust to him, and now he noticed faults in her that had otherwise remained hidden from him. Furthermore, it did not take a very sharp eye to see that a so-called cousin, who had arrived with her, had captured her attention and won much of her affection.

"Despite the anguish that Ferdinand suffered, he soon took heart; the conquest that he had already achieved once, seemed possible to him a second time. He saw Ottilie often and made himself observe her. He was cordial, even affectionate, to her and she was no less so; but her charms had lost their greatest power, and he realized soon that her conduct rarely came from the heart, that she could rather be tender and cold, charming and dismissive, pleasant and capricious, as she chose. His heart detached itself gradually from her, and he decided to break the last remaining ties.

"This operation was more painful than he had anticipated. He found her alone one day, and plucked up the courage to remind her of her promise, and to recall those moments when the two of them, stirred by the tenderest feeling, had made an agreement about their future life. She was friendly, one might almost say tender; he softened and wished at this moment that everything might be different than he had thought. However, he pulled himself together and calmly and lovingly narrated the story of the establishment that awaited him. She seemed pleased and, as it were, only to regret that for this reason their union would be further postponed. She made it clear that she hadn't the slightest desire to leave the city; she voiced her hope that by a few

years' work in that region he might enable himself to cut a distinguished figure among his present fellow-townsmen. She let him see plainly that she expected him in future to surpass his father and to prove in every way even more distinguished and upstanding.

"Only too clearly did Ferdinand sense that he could expect no happiness from such a match, and yet it was difficult to renounce so many charms. Indeed, perhaps he would have parted from her still undecided, if her cousin had not arrived in his turn and shown in his behavior rather too much familiarity with Ottilie. Ferdinand then wrote her a letter in which he again assured her that she would make him happy if she would follow him to his new calling, but that he did not consider it advisable for either of them to cherish a faint hope of future times and bind themselves to an uncertain future with a promise.

"Even to this letter he wished for a favorable answer; it came, however, not as his heart, but rather as his reason, had to approve. Ottilie released him gracefully from his promise without quite releasing his heart, and the note communicated the same for her sentiments; according to the sense, they were still bound, and according to the words, free.

"Why should I elaborate any further? Ferdinand hastened back to that peaceful countryside; his arrangements were soon made. He was orderly and diligent and only became all the more so when the good, natural girl whom we have already met blessed him as his spouse, and her old uncle did everything possible to make his domestic life secure and comfortable.

"I met him in later years, surrounded by a large, handsome family. He told me his story himself, and, as is often the case with people to whom in their early years something significant has happened, that episode had made such an impression on him that it had a profound influence on his life. Even as a husband and father he made a habit of often denying himself something that would have given him pleasure, simply in order not to get out of practice of such an admirable virtue; and his sole principle of education was, so to speak, that his children must be able, even on the spur of the moment, to renounce something.

"In a way that I could not initially approve, he would, for example, at dinner forbid one of the boys to eat a favorite food. To my surprise the boy remained cheerful, and it was as if nothing special had happened.

"And so the eldest, on his own initiative, often used to allow a special piece of fruit or some other delicacy to pass; and yet he allowed them, I would say, virtually everything, and there was no lack of good and bad conduct in his house. He seemed indifferent to everything and allowed them almost unbridled freedom, except that once a week he

would get the notion that everything had to happen on the dot. Then first thing in the morning the clocks were synchronized, everyone received his orders for the day, chores and amusements were piled up, and no one was allowed to miss a second. I could entertain you for hours with his discussion and comments on this remarkable mode of education. He used to joke with me about my vows as a Catholic priest and claimed that everyone, actually, should vow both temperance to himself and obedience to others, in order to practice it not constantly, but rather at the proper moment."

The Baroness made a few comments, and confessed that friend Ferdinand was on the whole, probably right, for in a kingdom, too, everything depended on the executive power; the legislative one could be as rational as it liked, it would avail the state nothing, if the executive were not powerful.

Louisa jumped to the window, for she heard Frederick riding into the courtyard. She went to meet him and led him into the room. He seemed cheerful, even though he had just come from scenes of misery and devastation, and instead of entering into a detailed story about the fire that had struck the house of their aunt, he assured them that her desk had most certainly burned up at the very same hour when their desk had so violently cracked.

"At the very moment," he said, "that the fire was already approaching the room, the steward managed to save a clock standing on this very desk. While he was carrying it out, something in the works must have been jostled, and it stopped at eleven-thirty. So we have, at least with respect to the time, complete agreement." The Baroness smiled; the tutor claimed that just because two events occurred simultaneously, you couldn't conclude that they were related. Louisa, however, chose to connect the two incidents, especially since she had received word that her fiancé was well, and once again they gave their imaginations completely free rein.

"Can't you," Carl said to the old gentleman, "tell us a fairy tale? Imagination is a wonderful faculty, but I don't like to see it applied to what has really happened. The ethereal forms it creates are welcome to us as a breed all their own; united to truth, it usually brings forth only monsters and then, it seems to me, generally stands in opposition to common sense and reason. It must, I think, attach itself to no object, it must force no object upon us; it should, in producing art, simply play upon us as music does, move us within ourselves, and indeed in such a way, that we forget there is anything outside us that generates this emotion."

"Do not continue," said the old man, "to elaborate your demands on works of the imagination in more detail. It is also appropriate to the enjoyment of such works that we enjoy them without demands;

for imagination itself cannot demand, it must await what is granted it. It makes no plans, chooses no path, but instead it is borne and led by its own wings; and as it swings back and forth it traces the strangest courses, which constantly shift and change direction. Allow me first, during my usual walk, to revive in my soul those strange images that often entertained me in years past. This evening I promise you a fairy tale that will remind you of nothing and of everything."

They were glad to let the old gentleman go, the more so because each of them hoped to gather from Frederick news and reports of what had happened in the meantime.

The Fairy Tale

By the great river, which was newly swollen with heavy rain and overflowing, the old ferryman, weary from the toil of the day, lay in his little hut and slept. In the middle of the night loud voices wakened him; it seemed that travelers wanted to be ferried across.

Stepping outside he saw hovering over his moored boat two large will-o'-the-wisps, who insisted they were in a great hurry and wished they were already across. The old man pushed off without delay and rowed across the river with his usual skill, while the strangers hissed at one another in an unfamiliar, very animated language, and occasionally burst into loud laughter as they capered now about the sides and benches, now upon the bottom of the boat.

"The boat is rocking!" cried the old man. "And if you are so wild it might capsize. Sit down, you wisps!"

They burst into laughter at the very idea, mocked the old man, and were wilder than ever. He bore their mischief with patience and soon reached the other side.

"This is for your trouble!" cried the travelers, and as they shook themselves, glittering gold pieces tumbled into the damp boat.

"For heaven's sake, what are you doing?" cried the old man. "You'll ruin me! If a single piece of gold had fallen into the water, the river, which cannot abide this metal, would have risen in terrible waves and swallowed my boat and me. And who knows how you yourselves would have fared? Take back your money!"

"We can take back nothing we have shaken off," they replied.

"So you are giving me the extra trouble," said the old man, as he stooped and gathered the gold coins in his cap, "of having to collect them, take them on shore, and bury them."

The will-o'-the-wisps had leaped from the boat, and the old man cried: "What about my fare?"

"Anyone who refuses gold can work for nothing!" cried the will-o'-the-wisps.

"You must know I can be paid only with fruits of the earth."

"With fruits of the earth? We despise them and have never touched them."

"Even so, I cannot let you go until you promise me three cabbages, three artichokes, and three large onions."

The will-o'-the-wisps wanted to slip away playfully, but they felt themselves inexplicably riveted to the ground; it was the most unpleasant sensation they had ever had. They promised to pay his claim right away; he released them and pushed off. He was already far away, when they called after him: "Old man! Listen, old man! We have forgotten the most important thing!" He was gone and did not hear them. He had drifted downstream on the same side of the river, where, in a mountainous place that the water could never reach, he planned to bury the dangerous gold. There among towering rocks he found an enormous cleft, tossed in the gold, and returned to his hut.

In this cleft lay the lovely green serpent, who was awakened from her sleep by the coins clinking down. She no sooner caught sight of the shining disks than she immediately devoured them with great relish and carefully sought out every one scattered in the brush and the chinks of the rock.

No sooner were they swallowed than she felt the gold melting in her entrails and spreading through her whole body with the most pleasant sensation; and to her great joy she discovered that she had become transparent and luminous. Long ago she had been assured that this phenomenon was possible; but since she doubted that the light could last long, curiosity and the desire to safeguard her future drove her out from the rocks to find out who could have strewn the beautiful gold about. She found no one. But it was that much pleasanter for her, as she crept along among the plants and bushes, to admire herself and the attractive light that she diffused through the fresh greenery. Every leaf seemed made of emerald, every flower gloriously transfigured. In vain did she roam through the lonely wilderness; but her hopes increased when she came out onto the plain and in the distance glimpsed a radiance that resembled her own. "I find my own kind at last!" she cried and hastened toward the place. She ignored the difficulties of creeping through swamp and reeds. For though she preferred to live in dry mountain meadows or in rocky clefts, though she liked to feed on aromatic herbs and to still her thirst with delicate dew or fresh spring water, yet for the sake of the beloved gold and in hope of finding the glorious light, she would willingly have undertaken anything that was imposed upon her.

Tired out, she came at last to a bog, where our two will-o'-the-wisps were frolicking about. She shot over to them, greeted them, and was delighted to find two such charming kinsmen. They went flitting past

her, danced over her and laughed in their fashion. "Dear Cousin," they said, "even if you do belong to the horizontal line of our family, it doesn't matter a bit. Of course we're related only on the luminosity side, for look here"—and at this, by sacrificing their entire breadth, the two flames made themselves as long and tapering as possible—"see how the long slender look becomes us gentlemen of the vertical line. Don't take it amiss, my dear friend, but what family can boast of the like? For as long as there have been will-o'-the-wisps, not one has ever sat down or lain flat."

The serpent felt exceedingly uncomfortable in the presence of these relatives, for however high she might lift her head, she realized that she still must lower it to earth again in order to move. And although she had been extraordinarily pleased with herself before in the dark grove, in the presence of these cousins her radiance seemed to diminish from one moment to the next, indeed she feared that it would at last die out altogether.

In her embarrassment she hastily inquired whether the gentlemen could not tell her whence came the glittering gold that shortly before had fallen into the chasm; she suspected it to be a shower of gold that had drizzled straight from heaven. The will-o'-the-wisps laughed and shook themselves, and a swarm of gold coins came tumbling about them. Swiftly the serpent lunged to devour them. "Bon appetit, dear Cousin," said the obliging gentlemen. "We can offer you more." And they proceeded to shake themselves several times more with great agility, so that the serpent could not gulp down the precious food fast enough. Her glow began to increase visibly, and truly she shone most gloriously, while the will-o'-the-wisps had become rather thin and small, without, however, losing an ounce of their good humor.

"I am forever in your debt," said the serpent, once she had caught her breath after her meal. "Ask of me what you will! Anything in my power I will do for you."

"Splendid!" cried the will-o'-the-wisps. "Tell us, where does the fair Lily live? Lead us as fast as you can to her palace and garden. We are dying of impatience to cast ourselves at her feet."

"This service," replied the serpent with a deep sigh, "I cannot perform at once. Unfortunately, the fair Lily lives on the other side of the river."

"On the other side of the river? And we came across on a stormy night like this? How cruel is the river that now divides us! Wouldn't it be possible to summon the old ferryman again?"

"It would be useless," replied the serpent. "Even if you found him on this side, he would not take you; he is allowed to bring everyone over here, no one the other way."

"Now we're in a pretty pickle! Is there no other way to cross?"

"A few, but not at this moment. I can take the gentlemen myself, but not until noon."

"That is a time when we do not like to travel."

"Well, in the evening you can cross on the shadow of the giant."

"How is that possible?"—"The great giant who lives not far from here can do nothing with his body: his hands couldn't lift a wisp of straw, his shoulders couldn't carry a bundle of twigs. But his shadow can do a great deal, in fact everything. That is why he is most powerful at sunrise and sunset. And so in the evening one need only sit upon the neck of the shadow; the giant walks gently toward the bank, and his shadow carries the traveler across the river. But if you want to come at noon to that wooded corner, where the underbrush grows right down to the riverbank, I can take you across and present you to the fair Lily; if, however, you're afraid of the noonday heat, you have only to look for the giant at sunset in that rocky cove. No doubt he will be pleased to oblige you."

With a graceful bow the young gentlemen took their leave. The serpent was happy to be rid of them, partly to enjoy her own light, partly to satisfy a curiosity that for some time had been tormenting her.

In the rocky clefts, where she often crawled about, she had made a remarkable discovery. Although she had to creep through these chasms without any light, she could distinguish objects well enough by touch. She was accustomed to encounter nothing but the irregular products of nature; sometimes she would wind her way between the sharp points of giant crystals, sometimes she would feel the snags and strands of pure silver and carry some precious gem with her out into the light. But to her great amazement, inside a rock enclosure sealed off on all sides, she had felt objects that revealed the forming hand of man. Smooth walls that she could not scale, sharp symmetrical angles, well-shaped columns, and, what seemed to her strangest of all, human figures, about which she had twined herself many times, and which she concluded must be made of metal or highly polished marble. All these perceptions she now wished to bring together at last through her sense of sight, and to confirm what she only conjectured. She believed she could now illuminate this wondrous subterranean vault with her own light, and hoped all at once to become fully acquainted with these peculiar objects. She hurried off on the usual way and soon found the fissure through which she was accustomed to slip into the sanctuary.

Once inside she looked about with curiosity; although her glow could not illuminate all the objects in the rotunda, the nearest ones appeared distinct enough. In amazement and awe she looked up into a glittering niche, in which stood the image of a venerable king, in pure gold. The statue was larger than life, yet it seemed the likeness of a small rather

than a large man. Its well-shaped body was draped with a simple cloak, and a wreath of oak held the hair.

Scarcely had the serpent looked at this venerable image than the king began to speak, asking "Whence comest thou?" "From the clefts where the gold dwells," replied the serpent.—"What is more glorious than gold?" asked the king. "Light," answered the serpent. "What is more refreshing than light?" he asked. "Discourse," she answered.

As they spoke she had glanced to the side and seen in the next niche another splendid image. There sat a king of silver, a tall and somewhat delicate figure; his body was covered with an embroidered robe; crown, girdle, and sceptre were adorned with jewels. In his countenance shone the serenity of pride, and he seemed about to speak, when suddenly a dark vein running through the marble wall grew bright and spread a pleasant light throughout the temple. By this light the serpent saw the third king, who sat, a mighty form of bronze, leaning on his club, adorned with a laurel wreath, and seeming more rock than human. She was about to go look at the fourth king, who stood farthest from her, but the wall opened as the glowing vein flashed and disappeared.

A man of ordinary height, who stepped out, drew the serpent's attention. He was dressed as a peasant and carried in his hand a small lamp, into whose quiet flame it was pleasant to gaze, and which miraculously, without casting a single shadow, lit up the whole vault.

"Why have you come, when we already have light?" asked the golden king.

"You know I may not enlighten what is dark."

"Shall my kingdom come to an end?" asked the silver king. "Late or never," replied the old man.

In a booming voice the bronze king began to ask: "When shall I arise?"—"Soon," replied the old man. "With whom should I join?" asked the king. "With your elder brothers," said the old man. "What shall become of the youngest?" asked the king. "He shall be seated," said the old man.

"I am not tired," cried the fourth king in a rasping, uneven voice.

During this exchange the serpent had crept softly about the temple, had inspected everything, and was now examining the fourth king close at hand. He stood leaning on a column, and his imposing figure was heavy rather than handsome. In what metal he was cast, however, was not easy to determine. Examined closely, it was a mixture of the three metals from which his brothers were formed. But during the casting these materials seemed not to have fused properly; gold and silver veins ran irregularly through a bronze mass and gave the figure an unpleasant look.

Meanwhile the golden king was saying to the man: "How many secrets dost thou know?"—"Three," answered the old man. "Which is

the most important?" asked the silver king. "The revealed one," answered the old man. "Wilt thou reveal it also unto us?" asked the bronze king. "As soon as I know the fourth," said the old man. "What do I care!" murmured the composite king to himself.

"I know the fourth," said the serpent; she approached the old man and hissed something in his ear. "The time is at hand!" cried the old man in a mighty voice. The temple echoed, the metal statues rang, and at once the old man sank toward the west and the serpent toward the east, and both passed with great swiftness through the clefts in the rocks.

All the passages through which the old man traveled at once filled up with gold after him; for his lamp had the miraculous property of transforming all stones into gold, all wood into silver, dead creatures into jewels, and of annihilating all metals. But to manifest this effect, it had to shine all alone; whenever there was another light, it produced only a lovely, bright luster, and all living things were always refreshed by it.

The old man entered his hut, which was built against the mountain, and found his wife in terrible distress. She sat by the fire and wept and would not be consoled. "How unhappy I am!" she exclaimed. "I knew I shouldn't have let you leave today!"—"What's wrong, then?" asked the old man calmly.

"No sooner were you gone," she said sobbing, "than two boisterous travelers arrived at the door. Foolishly I let them in; they seemed to be pleasant, proper people. They were dressed in light flames, you could have taken them for will-o'-the-wisps. No sooner were they in the house, than they began to flatter me shamelessly; finally they were so impertinent that I'm ashamed even to think about it."

"Well," replied her husband smiling, "the gentlemen were probably joking; considering your age, they ought surely to have confined themselves to common politeness."

"Age! What age!" cried the wife. "Must I always hear about my age? How old am I then? Common politeness! I know what I know. And just take a look at those walls; just look at the old stones, which I haven't seen these hundred years. They've licked off all the gold, you wouldn't believe how quickly, and they kept telling me the whole time it tasted much better than ordinary gold. After they had scoured the walls bare, they seemed in a very good mood, and really, in that short time they had gotten much taller, broader and brighter. Then they started in again with their nonsense, stroked me again, called me their queen, shook themselves, and gold coins went flying all over; you can still see them shining there under the bench. But what a disaster! Our pug ate some of them, and look, there he is lying dead by the hearth. The poor creature! I will never get over it. I didn't notice until after

they had gone, otherwise I wouldn't have promised to pay their debt to the ferryman."—

"What do they owe him?" asked the old man.

"Three cabbages," said his wife, "three artichokes, and three onions. I promised to carry them to the river in the morning."

"You can do them this favor," said the old man, "for they may well help us sometime in return."

"I don't know whether they will help us, but they certainly promised and swore that they would."

Meanwhile the fire had burned down on the hearth. The old man spread a thick layer of ashes over the coals and cleared away the glittering gold pieces; and now once again his little lamp shone all alone with the loveliest radiance; the walls coated themselves with gold, and the pug had become the most beautiful onyx imaginable. The alternation of brown and black in the precious stone made it an extraordinary masterpiece.

"Take your basket," said the old man, "and put the onyx in it. Then take the three cabbages, the three artichokes, and the three onions, lay them around it, and carry them to the river. At noon let the serpent take you across, and visit the fair Lily; take her the onyx. She will bring it to life with her touch, just as, by her touch, she kills everything that is alive. She'll find him a faithful companion. Tell her she shouldn't grieve, her deliverance is near; tell her she may regard the greatest misfortune as the greatest good fortune, for the time is at hand."

The old woman packed her basket and set out when it was light. The rising sun shone brightly over the river glittering in the distance. She proceeded at a slow pace, for the basket weighed upon her head, and yet it was not the onyx that was so heavy. She never felt the weight of anything dead she carried; rather the basket would immediately rise into the air and float over her head. But to carry a fresh vegetable or a small living creature was extremely tiring. She had been walking along for a while, rather cross, when suddenly she stopped in fright: she had almost stepped on the giant's shadow, which stretched across the plain right up to her. Only now did she see the immense giant, who had been bathing in the river, step out of the water, and she didn't know how to avoid him. As soon as he noticed her, he began to greet her jokingly, and the hands of his shadow reached at once into the basket. With ease and dexterity they removed a cabbage, an artichoke, and an onion and carried them to the mouth of the giant, who then continued upriver, and left her path free.

She thought about whether she shouldn't return home and replace the missing vegetables from her garden, and with these doubts kept walking on, so that she soon arrived at the edge of the river. She sat a long time waiting for the ferryman, whom she finally saw crossing

with a remarkable traveler. A noble, handsome young man, from whom she could not tear her eyes, stepped out of the boat.

"What have you got?" called the old man. "The vegetables the will-o'-the-wisps owe you," replied the woman and showed her wares. When the old man found only two of each kind, he was annoyed, and declared that he could not accept them. The woman implored him, told him that she couldn't go home now, and that the weight would be a burden on the errand she had before her. He still refused, insisting that it was not even up to him. "Whatever I have earned I must leave standing for nine hours, and I may take nothing until I have given the river one third." After much haggling the old man finally responded: "There is still a way. If you will make a pledge to the river and acknowledge yourself its debtor, I will accept the six vegetables; but there is some risk involved."

"Surely if I keep my word, I run no risk?"

"Not the least. Put your hand into the river," the old man continued, "and promise that in twenty-four hours you will pay what you owe."

The old woman did so; but wasn't she frightened, when she drew her hand out of the water coal black! She scolded the old man vigorously, protesting that her hands had always been her most beautiful feature and that in spite of hard work she had managed to keep these noble limbs white and delicate. She inspected her hand indignantly, then cried in despair: "This is worse yet! I can see that it's actually shrunk, it's much smaller than the other."

"It only appears so now," said the old man. "But if you don't keep your word, it may come true. The hand will gradually shrink away and finally vanish altogether, without your losing the use of it. You will be able to do anything with it, only no one will see it."

"I would rather not be able to use it, and have no one able to tell," said the old woman. "In the meantime, it makes no difference; I'll keep my word in order to get rid of this black skin soon, and this worry." Hastily she took up the basket, which rose of its own accord above her head and floated freely in the air; then she hurried after the young man, who was quietly and pensively walking along the river bank. His splendid form and his remarkable clothing had made a deep impression on the old woman.

His chest was covered with glittering mail, through which every motion of his handsome body was revealed. A purple mantle hung about his shoulders, beautiful locks of brown hair cascaded about his bare head. His graceful face was exposed to the sun's rays, as were his beautifully shaped feet. Barefoot he walked calmly across the hot sand, and some profound sorrow seemed to dull all outer impressions.

The chatty old woman tried to draw him into conversation; but he responded only in monosyllables, so that, his beautiful eyes notwith-

standing, she finally got tired of addressing him without success, and took leave of him, saying: "You walk too slowly for me, sir; I must not miss the time to cross the river on the green serpent and bring the fair Lily my husband's splendid gift." With these words she proceeded rapidly; and just as swiftly the handsome youth pulled himself together and hurried after her. "You're going to the fair Lily!" he cried. "Then we are going the same way. What sort of present are you taking?"

"Sir," replied the old woman, "it is not fair, after you have declined my questions so brusquely, to inquire so eagerly into my secrets. If, however, you will agree to an exchange, and tell me your story, then I will not conceal from you what the situation is with me and my present." They soon reached agreement; the woman confided her circumstances, the story of the dog, and let him see the marvelous gift.

He immediately lifted the natural artwork from the basket and took in his arms the pug, which seemed to be resting quietly. "Fortunate creature," he cried. "You will be touched by her hands, you will be revived by her, while living things must flee her to avoid an unhappy fate. But what do I mean, unhappy? Isn't it far more distressing and frightful to be paralyzed by her presence than it would be to die by her hand? Look at me!" he said to the old woman. "At my age, what a wretched state I must endure! This armor, which I wore with honor in battle, this purple mantle, which I tried to deserve by governing wisely; these Fate has left to me: the one as an unnecessary burden, the other as a meaningless adornment. Crown, scepter, and sword are gone. I am otherwise as naked and needy as any other mortal, for so unholy is the effect of her beautiful blue eyes, that they drain all living creatures of their strength, and those whom the touch of her hand does not kill outright are transformed into living, wandering shadows!"

He continued to lament in this fashion, and by no means satisfied the curiosity of the old woman, who did not want to hear about his internal as well as his external circumstances. She learned neither the name of his father, nor of his kingdom. He stroked the hard pug, whom the sun's rays and the warm breast of the youth had warmed, so that it seemed alive. He asked a great deal about the man with the lamp and the powers of the sacred light, and seemed to expect from it in future great benefit for his melancholy state.

As they talked they saw in the distance the majestic arch of the bridge, which stretched from one bank to the other, shimmering most marvelously in the bright sunlight. Both were amazed, for they had never yet seen this structure so glorious. "What!" cried the prince. "Wasn't it already beautiful enough, when it stood before our eyes as if built of jasper and chalcedony? Must we not fear to set foot on it, now that it appears to be composed of emerald, chrysoprase, and chrysolite in the most enchanting variety?" Neither knew of the change

that had come over the serpent; for it was the serpent, who every noon arched herself across the river to form a daring bridge. The travelers stepped onto it with awe and crossed in silence.

They had scarcely reached the far side, when the bridge began to sway and move. Soon it touched the surface of the water and the green serpent, in her characteristic form, glided onto the land after the travelers. The two of them had scarcely thanked her for permitting them to cross the river on her back, when they noticed that, besides the three of them, there must be others present whom they could not actually see. They heard their hissing, to which the serpent gave an answering hiss. They listened attentively, and were finally able to discern the following: "First we will have a look incognito around the fair Lily's park," said a pair of alternating voices, "and we will request you to introduce us at nightfall, as soon as we are at all presentable, to this perfect beauty. You will find us by the edge of the large lake."—"Agreed," replied the serpent, and a hiss died away in the air.

Our three travelers consulted now on the order in which they would appear before the fair one, for however many people might be with her, they had to come and go one at a time, if they were not to suffer severe pain.

The woman, with the transformed dog in her basket, approached the garden first and looked for her benefactress, who was easy to find, because she was just then singing to the harp. The delightful tones appeared first as rings on the still surface of the lake, then like a gentle breeze they stirred the grass and shrubbery. In a secluded glade, in the shadow of a magnificent grouping of different trees she sat, and at her first appearance she enthralled anew the eyes, ears, and heart of the woman, who approached her in rapture and vowed to herself that during her absence the fair one had only grown fairer than ever. Still at some distance the good woman called greetings and praises to the enchanting girl. "What a pleasure to see you! What a heaven does your presence spread around you! How beautifully the harp rests in your lap, how gently your arms encircle it, how it seems to long for your breast, and how delicately it sounds at the touch of your slender fingers! Thrice happy the young man who could take its place!"

With these words she had come nearer. The fair Lily raised her eyes, let her hands fall, and replied: "Do not distress me with untimely praise! I suffer only that much more. Look, here at my feet the poor canary is dead who accompanied my songs so beautifully. He used to sit on my harp and was carefully trained not to touch me. Today, after a refreshing sleep, as I began a peaceful morning hymn and my little singer poured out his harmonies more gaily than ever, a hawk swoops down over my head. The poor little creature, terrified, flies to my breast, and in that instant I feel the last twitches of his parting life.

To be sure, struck by my gaze, the robber is creeping about over there by the water, powerless; but how can his punishment help me? My favorite is dead, and his grave will only increase the mournful shrubbery of my garden!"

"Take heart, dear Lily!" cried the woman, as she dried off a tear drawn from her eyes by the tale of the unhappy girl. "Be brave! My old man says to tell you to calm your grief, to look on the greatest misfortune as the forerunner of the greatest happiness, for the time is at hand. And truly," the old woman went on, "strange things are afoot. Just look at my hand, see how it has turned black! Truly, it's already much smaller, I must hurry, before it disappears altogether! Oh, why did I have to do the will-o'-the-wisps a favor, why did I have to meet the giant, and why dip my hand in the river? Couldn't you give me a cabbage, an artichoke and an onion? Then I can take them to the river and my hand will be as white as before, so that I could almost compare it with yours."

"Cabbages and onions you could probably still find, but artichokes you will seek in vain. No plant in my huge garden bears either blossoms or fruits, though every sprig I break off and plant on the grave of a loved one at once turns green and shoots up. Alas, I have seen all these clumps, shrubs, and groves grow. The umbrellas of these pines, the obelisks of these cypresses, the colossal oaks and beeches—they were all little twigs planted by my hand as a sad memorial in otherwise unfruitful soil."

The old woman had paid little attention to this speech and only watched her hand, which in the presence of the fair Lily seemed to grow blacker and blacker, and smaller by the minute. She was about to take her basket and hurry off, when she realized that she had forgotten the best part. She lifted the transformed dog out at once and placed it in the grass not far from the fair one. "My husband," she said, "sends you this keepsake. You know that you can bring this jewel to life with your touch. The sweet, faithful creature will surely make you very happy, and my grief at losing him can only be cheered by the thought that you possess him."

The fair Lily looked at the engaging creature with pleasure and, as it seemed, amazement. "Many signs come together," she said, "to bring me some hope. But alas, isn't it only a delusion of our nature to imagine, when several misfortunes coincide, that the best is near?"

What help are all good omens that appear:
The bird's death, my friend's black hand I see,
The pug of precious stone, has he indeed a peer?
And has the lamp not sent him here to me?

Sweet human joys, far distant, are no more,

And misery alone is now my friend,
Alas, why stands no temple on the shore?
Alas, why does no bridge its arch extend?"

The good woman had listened impatiently to this song, which the fair Lily accompanied with the pleasant tones of her harp, and which would have enthralled anyone else. She was just about to take her leave, when she was once again prevented by the arrival of the green serpent. The latter had heard the last lines of the song and confidently encouraged the fair Lily at once.

"The prophecy of the bridge is fulfilled!" she cried. "Just ask this good woman how splendid the arch now looks. What was once opaque jasper, mere chalcedony, through which the light glimmered at best only at the edges, has now become transparent gemstone. No beryl is so clear and no emerald so beautiful a color."

"I congratulate you for it," said Lily, "but forgive me if I do not yet believe the prophecy fulfilled. Over the high arch of your bridge only foot passengers can pass, and we have been promised that horses and carriages and travelers of all kinds shall cross back and forth over the bridge at the same time. And hasn't it been prophesied that great pillars will arise of themselves out of the river?"

The old woman had kept her eyes fixed constantly on her hand, interrupted the conversation here, and said goodbye. "Stay just one moment more," said the beautiful Lily, "and take my poor canary bird with you! Ask the lamp to change him into a beautiful topaz. I will revive him with my touch, and he, along with your good pug, will be my favorite amusement. But hurry as fast as you can, for at sunset corruption will seize the poor creature and destroy for ever the beautiful unity of his form."

The old woman laid the little corpse between soft leaves in her basket and hurried off.

"Be that as it may," said the serpent, resuming their interrupted conversation, "the temple is built."

"But it does not yet stand on the river," replied the fair one.

"It still rests in the depths of the earth," said the serpent. "I have seen the kings and spoken with them."

"But when will they arise?" asked Lily.

The serpent replied: "I heard the great words resound in the temple: 'The time is at hand!'"

A cheerful brightness suffused the beautiful countenance. "That is the second time that I have heard those happy words today. When will the day come that I shall hear them three times?"

She stood up, and at once a lovely maiden stepped from the shrubbery and took her harp. She was followed by a second, who folded the

carved ivory chair on which Lily had been sitting and took the silver cushion under her arm. Then a third, carrying a large parasol sewn with pearls, took her place, to see whether Lily might need her on a walk. These three maidens were beautiful and engaging beyond all expression, and yet they only enhanced Lily's beauty, for it was plain to all that they could not be compared with her.

Meanwhile, the fair Lily had been looking kindly at the marvelous pug. She bent down, touched him, and instantly he sprang to his feet. Gaily he looked around, ran back and forth, and finally dashed over to greet his benefactress warmly. She took him in her arms and hugged him. "Cold as you are," she exclaimed, "and even though you are only half alive, I am glad to have you. I will love you tenderly, play with you nicely, pet you affectionately, and hug you tightly." Then she let him go, chased him away, called him back, teased him so sweetly, and played with him in the grass so gaily and innocently, that one had to watch with delight and share her joy, just as a short time before her grief had moved every heart to compassion.

This happiness, these pleasant games were interrupted by the arrival of the sad youth. He entered as we have already seen him, except that the heat of the day seemed to have fatigued him still further, and in the presence of his beloved he grew paler with every moment. On his hand he carried the hawk, which sat quiet as a dove, and drooped its wings.

"It is not kind," Lily called to him, "to bring that hateful creature before me, that monster who killed my little singer today."

"Don't blame the poor bird!" replied the youth. "Accuse yourself instead, and fate, and allow me to keep my companion in misery."

Meanwhile the pug continued to tease the fair one, and she responded to her transparent pet most affectionately. She clapped her hands to shoo him away; then she ran to make him follow her. She tried to catch him when he fled, and chased him away whenever he tried to jump up on her. The youth watched in silence and with growing irritation. But finally, when she took the ugly creature, which he found utterly repulsive, in her arms, pressed him to her white bosom, and kissed his black muzzle with her heavenly lips, he lost all patience and exclaimed in despair: "Must I, who am fated to live with you, perhaps forever, in absent presence, I, who through you have lost everything, even myself—must I see with my own eyes how such an unnatural freak can make you happy, win your love, and enjoy your embrace? Am I to keep going to and fro, treading out the weary circle back and forth across the river? No, there still lingers a spark of the old heroic mettle in my breast; now let it burst into a final flame! If stones can rest at your breast, let me be turned to stone; if your touch kills, then I will die at your hands."

With these words he made a violent movement. The hawk flew from his hand, but he lurched forward towards the fair one. She stretched out her hands to hold him off, and touched him all the sooner. Consciousness left him, and with horror she felt the dear burden on her bosom. With a cry she stepped back, and the handsome youth sank lifeless from her arms to the ground.

The misfortune had occurred! Sweet Lily stood motionless, and stared at the lifeless body. Her heart seemed to falter in her bosom and her eyes were without tears. In vain the pug tried to provoke some friendly gesture; the whole world had died with her lover. Her mute despair sought no assistance, for it knew of none.

The serpent, by contrast, bestirred herself all the more. She seemed intent on rescue, and really her strange action did stave off at least the most immediate dreadful effects of the disaster for a time. With her supple body she made a wide circle around the corpse, seized the end of her tail in her teeth and lay still.

It was not long before one of Lily's beautiful handmaidens came forward, bringing the ivory stool, and with kindly gestures made her sit down. Soon after came the second, who brought a flame-colored veil and with it adorned, rather than covered, her mistress's head. The third handed her the harp, and scarcely had she taken the magnificent instrument to her and enticed a few notes from the strings, than the first returned with a bright round mirror, placed herself opposite the fair one, caught her glances in the mirror, and showed to her the loveliest image to be found in nature. Grief enhanced her beauty, the veil her charms, the harp her grace; and much as everyone hoped to see her sad state change, they wished equally to preserve forever the image of her as she was now.

Gazing quietly into the mirror she would draw melting notes from the strings, then her grief would seem to increase, and the strings throbbed answer to her affliction. At times she opened her mouth to sing, but her voice failed her. Soon her grief melted into tears, two maidens caught her by the arms, the harp dropped from her lap; the swift handmaiden just caught the instrument and put it aside.

"Who will get us the man with the lamp before the sun sets?" hissed the serpent softly but audibly; the maidens looked at one another and Lily's tears increased. Just then the woman came back with the basket, breathless. "I am lost and mutilated!" she cried. "Look how my hand has almost completely disappeared! Neither the ferryman nor the giant would take me across, because I am still in debt to the water. In vain have I offered a hundred cabbages and a hundred onions; only those three will do, and there is not a single artichoke to be found anywhere around here."

"Forget your trouble," said the serpent, "and try to help here; perhaps at the same time you can be helped as well. Hurry as fast as you can to find the will-o'-the-wisps; it is still too light to see them, but maybe you'll hear them laughing and capering. If they hurry, the giant will still take them across the river, and they can find the man with the lamp and send him."

The woman hurried as fast as she could, and the serpent seemed to await the return of both as impatiently as Lily. Unfortunately, the rays of the setting sun were already gilding the highest summits of the trees in the thicket, and long shadows were drawing over lake and meadow. The serpent stirred impatiently and Lily dissolved in tears.

In this extremity the serpent looked all about her, for she feared that at any moment the sun would set, decay penetrate the magic circle, and inexorably attack the handsome youth. Finally, high in the air she caught sight of the crimson feathers of the hawk, whose breast caught the last rays of the sun. She trembled with joy at the good omen, and she was not deceived; for soon after the man with the lamp could be seen gliding across the lake, just as if he were skating.

The serpent did not change her position, but Lily stood up and called to him: "What good spirit sends you at the moment when we want you so much and need you so much?"

"The spirit of my lamp impels me," replied the old man, "and the hawk has led me here. The lamp sputters when I am needed, and I just look about in the sky for a sign; a bird or a meteor shows me in what direction I should head. Be calm, loveliest maiden! Whether I can help or not, I do not know; no one can help by himself, but only when he unites with many others at the right time. Let's wait and hope. Keep your circle closed," he went on, as he turned to the serpent, sat down on a mound beside her, and illuminated the dead body. "Bring the little canary here too, and lay him in the circle!" The maidens took the tiny corpse out of the basket, which the old woman had left behind, and obeyed the man.

The sun had meanwhile set, and, as the darkness increased, not only did the serpent and the old man's lamp begin to shine, each in its own way, but Lily's veil also diffused a soft light that, like the delicate glow of dawn, tinged her pale cheeks and her white garment with infinite grace. They gazed at one another in silent contemplation; care and sorrow were eased by sure hope.

Thus there was nothing unwelcome in the appearance of the old woman, accompanied by the two merry wisps, who, to be sure, must have been very prodigal in the interim, for they had again grown extremely thin. But they only behaved all the more courteously to the princess and the other young women. With great assurance and style they said rather ordinary things; they were especially responsive to the

allure that the gleaming veil shed over Lily and her companions. Modestly the young women lowered their eyes, and the praise of their beauty actually made them more beautiful. Everyone was content and calm except for the old woman. Despite her husband's assurance that her hand could shrink no further so long as the lamp shone upon it, she asserted more than once that if things went on like this, by midnight this noble member would vanish completely.

The old man with the lamp had been listening carefully to the conversation of the will-o'-the-wisps, and was glad that Lily had been distracted and cheered by this recreation. And indeed, midnight had come, no one knew how. The old man looked at the stars and then began to speak: "We are met at a fortunate hour. Everyone perform your office, everyone do your duty, and communal good fortune will assuage individual griefs just as communal misfortune devours individual joys."

After these words there arose a wondrous murmur, for everyone present spoke to himself and said aloud what he had to do. Only the three maidens were silent; one had fallen asleep beside the harp, the second beside the parasol, the third beside the chair, and no one could blame them, for it was late. The fiery youths had, after a few brief courtesies to the handmaidens, in the end attended exclusively to Lily as the most beautiful of all.

"Take the mirror," said the old man to the hawk, "and with the first rays of the sun illuminate the sleeping women and awaken them with light reflected from above!"

The serpent now began to move; she opened the circle and undulated slowly in great rings toward the river. Solemnly the two will-o'-the-wisps followed her, and they could have passed for the most serious of wisps. The old woman and her husband took hold of the basket, whose soft light had hardly been noticed up to now; they pulled from both sides and it grew steadily larger and brighter. Then they lifted the corpse of the youth into it and placed the canary on his breast. The basket rose into the air and floated above the old woman's head, and she followed at the heels of the will-o'-the-wisps. The fair Lily took the pug in her arms and followed the old woman; the man with the lamp concluded the procession, and the landscape was most oddly illuminated by these varied lights.

But with no little amazement the company saw, as they arrived at the river, a splendid arch spanning it; the benevolent serpent had prepared them a glittering path. If by day they had admired the transparent gems of which the bridge seemed composed, at night they were astounded by its shining glory. Above, the brilliant arc stood out sharply against the dark sky, but below, vivid rays flickered towards the center and revealed the airy strength of the structure. The procession crossed

slowly, and the ferryman, looking out from his hut in the distance, regarded with amazement the shining circle and the strange lights passing over it.

Scarcely had they arrived on the far bank than the arch began to sway in its characteristic way and to undulate toward the water. Soon after the serpent reached the land, the basket settled to the ground, and the serpent again made her circle around it. The old man bowed down before her and spoke: "What have you decided?"

"To sacrifice myself before I am sacrificed," replied the serpent. "Promise me that you will not leave a single stone on land!"

The old man promised, and then said to the fair Lily: "Touch the serpent with your left hand and your beloved with your right!" Lily knelt down and touched the serpent and the corpse. Instantly the youth seemed to come to life; he stirred inside the basket, indeed rose up to sitting position. Lily was about to embrace him, but the old man restrained her; instead he helped the youth stand up and guided him as he stepped from the basket and the circle.

The youth stood upright, the canary fluttered on his shoulder; there was again life in them both, but the spirit had not yet returned. The handsome lover had his eyes open and did not see; at least he seemed to look at everything without interest. And scarcely had their astonishment at this circumstance subsided somewhat, than they noticed how strangely the serpent had been transformed. Her beautiful, slender body had separated into thousands and thousands of shining gems. In reaching for her basket, the old woman had carelessly bumped into her, and nothing more was to be seen of the serpent's shape: only a beautiful ring of glowing gems lay in the grass.

The old man immediately set about to gather the stones into the basket, at which task his wife had to assist him. Both of them then carried the basket to an elevated spot on the bank, and he poured the entire load, not without opposition from Lily and his wife, who would have liked to select a few for themselves, into the river. Like shining, twinkling stars the stones floated down with the waves, and it was impossible to tell whether they were lost in the distance or sank to the bottom.

"Gentlemen," the old man then said deferentially to the will-o'-the-wisps, "now I will show you the way and open the passage. But you will be doing us the greatest favor, if you will open the portal of the sanctuary, through which we must this time enter, and which none but yourselves can unlock."

The will-o'-the-wisps bowed decorously and remained behind. The old man with the lamp went ahead into the rock, which opened before him. The youth followed him as if mechanically; silent and uncertain Lily stayed some distance behind him; the old woman did not want

to be left behind and stretched out her hand, so that the light from her husband's lamp would shine on it. The will-o'-the-wisps brought up the rear, bending the tips of their flames together and seeming to talk to one another.

They had not been walking long when the procession reached a great brazen portal whose leaves were bolted with a golden lock. The old man immediately summoned the will-o'-the-wisps, who needed little encouragement; with their sharpest flames they energetically consumed lock and bolt.

The bronze rang loudly as the portals suddenly sprang open, and in the sanctuary the stately images of the kings, illuminated by the entering lights, came into view. Everyone bowed before the venerable sovereigns, and especially the will-o'-the-wisps did not fail to make the most elaborate reverences.

After a pause the golden king asked: "Whence do ye come?"—"From the world," answered the old man. "Whither do ye go?" asked the silver king. "Into the world," said the old man. "What do ye want here with us?" asked the bronze king. "To accompany you," said the old man.

The composite king was just about to speak, when the golden king said to the will-o'-the-wisps, who had come too close: "Get you behind me; my gold is not for feeding you!" Next they turned to the silver king and nestled against him; his robe shone beautifully with their yellow reflection. "I welcome you," he said, "but I cannot nourish you. Eat your fill elsewhere and bring me your light!" They moved away and stole past the bronze king, who did not seem to notice them, to the composite one. "Who shall rule the world?" asked this king stut-tering. "He who stands on his feet," the old man answered. "I am he!" said the composite king. "That shall soon be revealed," said the old man, "for the time is at hand."

The fair Lily threw her arms around the old man's neck and kissed him warmly. "Holy Father," she said, "I thank you a thousand times over, for I am now hearing those prophetic words for the third time." She had scarcely finished speaking, when she held on to the old man even tighter, for the ground was beginning to heave beneath their feet. The old woman and the youth also clung to one another; only the nimble will-o'-the-wisps noticed nothing.

They could distinctly feel the whole temple move, like a ship gently leaving harbor when the anchors are weighed. The depths of the earth seemed to open before it as it passed. It struck nothing, no rock stood in its path.

For a few moments a fine rain seemed to drizzle through the opening of the dome. The old man held the fair Lily more tightly and said to her, "We are under the river, and soon at our goal." Not long after,

they thought they had stopped, but they were mistaken: the temple was rising.

Then there arose a strange clatter over their heads. A shapeless assemblage of boards and rafters came crashing in through the opening of the dome. Lily and the old woman jumped aside, the man with the lamp seized the youth and stood fast. The ferryman's little hut—for this was what the temple had dislodged and engulfed in its upward progress—gradually sank to the floor and covered the youth and the old man.

The women screamed and the temple shuddered, like a ship unexpectedly running aground. Anxiously the women wandered in the half-light around the hut; the door was locked and no one answered their knocking. They knocked harder and were not a little amazed, when at length the wood began to ring. By the power of the lamp sealed inside, the hut had turned to silver from within. Before long it even changed form; for the noble metal abandoned the chance configurations of planks, posts, and beams and extended itself to form a magnificent housing of chased silver. Now there stood a magnificent small temple in the middle of the large one, or, if you like, an altar worthy of the temple.

By a staircase leading upward from the inside, the noble youth now mounted aloft; the man with the lamp lighted his path, and he seemed to be supported by another man, who emerged in a short white garment and carried a silver oar in his hand. They recognized him immediately as the ferryman, the erstwhile occupant of the transformed hut.

The fair Lily climbed the outer stairs from the temple to the altar, but she still had to remain apart from her beloved. The old woman, whose hand had continued to grow smaller and smaller as long as the lamp was concealed, cried: "Shall I be lost after all? Among so many miracles, is there no miracle to save my hand?" Her husband pointed to the open door and said: "Look, day is breaking, hurry and bathe in the river!"—

"What advice!" she cried. "That would make me turn black all over and disappear completely; after all, I still haven't paid my debt!"—

"Go ahead," said the old man, "and do as I say. All debts have been paid."

The old woman hurried away, and at that moment the light of the rising sun appeared at the rim of the dome. The old man stepped between the youth and the maiden and cried in a loud voice: "Three things there be that rule on earth: wisdom, appearance, and power." At the first word the golden king stood up, at the second the silver one, and at the third the bronze king slowly arose, while the composite king abruptly and clumsily sat down.

Despite the solemnity of the moment, the onlookers could hardly refrain from laughing, for he did not sit, he did not lie, he did not lean: he had simply collapsed formlessly.

The will-o'-the-wisps, who until now had been busy with him, stepped aside. Although pale in the morning light, they seemed once again well nourished and in the best of flame. They had skillfully licked the golden veins out of the colossal figure with their pointed tongues, even the tiniest ones. The irregular hollow spaces thus produced stayed open for a while, and the figure retained its former shape. But when at last even the most delicate veins were consumed, the statue suddenly collapsed, unfortunately at just those places that hold their shape when one sits down; whereas the joints, which ought to have bent, remained stiff. There was no choice but to laugh or look away; this cross between form and lump was a hideous sight.

The man with the lamp now led the handsome, but still rigidly staring, youth down from the altar and straight to the bronze king. At the feet of the mighty sovereign lay a sword in a brazen sheath. The youth girded it on. "The sword at the left, the right hand free!" cried the powerful monarch. They went then to the silver king, who extended his scepter to the youth. The latter grasped it with his left hand, and the king said in a gracious voice: "Tend the sheep!" When they came to the golden king he pressed the oak wreath on the young man's head with a gesture of paternal blessing and said: "Know the highest!"

During this circuit the old man had carefully observed the youth. After he had girded on the sword, his chest swelled, his arms stirred, and he walked with a firmer step. When he took the scepter in his hand, his strength appeared to be tempered and to become, through some indescribable allure, even more powerful. But when the oak wreath adorned his locks, his face came alive, his eyes shone with ineffable spirit, and the first word of his mouth was "Lily."

"Dear Lily!" he cried, hastening up the silver stairs to meet her, for she had viewed his tour from the top of the altar. "Dear Lily! What more precious thing can a fully-endowed man wish for, than the innocence and the quiet love your heart offers me?—Oh my friend," he went on, turning to the old man and regarding the three holy statues, "glorious and secure is the kingdom of our fathers, but you have forgotten the fourth power, which has ruled the world longer, more universally, more securely: the power of love." With these words he threw his arms around the fair maiden. She had thrown off her veil, and her cheeks were suffused with the loveliest, most imperishable blush.

The old man responded, smiling, "Love does not rule; but it forms, and that is more."

Amid this solemnity, this happiness, this rapture they had not noticed that it was broad daylight, and now suddenly, through the open

portal, the most unexpected objects met their eyes. A large space surrounded by columns formed the forecourt, at the end of which they saw a long and splendid bridge spanning the river with many arches. It was provided with splendid arcades on both sides for the comfort of foot travelers, of whom many thousands had already appeared and were passing busily to and fro. The great highway in the center was alive with herds and mules, riders and carriages that flowed freely back and forth like a river on both sides. They all seemed to admire the comfort and splendor, and the new king and his consort were as delighted by the movement and life of this great populace, as they were made happy by their mutual love.

"Remember the serpent and honor her!" said the man with the lamp. "You owe her your life, your people owe her the bridge, by which alone these neighboring shores have been brought to life as countries and united. Those floating and shining jewels, the remains of her sacrificed body, are the foundations of this magnificent bridge; upon them it has built itself and will maintain itself."

They were about to demand from him the explanation of this wonderful mystery, when four beautiful maidens entered the portal of the temple. By the harp, the parasol, and the folding chair they at once recognized Lily's attendants, but the fourth, fairer than the other three, was a stranger, who, joking in sisterly fashion, hurried with them through the temple and mounted the silver stairs.

"Will you believe me from now on, dear wife?" said the man with the lamp to the beautiful girl. "Happy are you and every creature that bathes in the river this morning!"

The rejuvenated and beautified old woman, of whose shape not a trace remained, embraced with eager, youthful arms the man with the lamp, who responded with affection to her caresses. "If I am too old for you," he said smiling, "you may choose another husband today. From today on no marriage is valid that is not joined anew."

"Don't you know," she replied, "that you also have grown younger?"

"I am glad, if to your young eyes I appear to be a sturdy youth. I'll marry you again and gladly live on with you into the next millennium."

The queen welcomed her new friend and descended into the altar with her and her other companions, while the king, between the two men, looked towards the bridge and attentively regarded the teeming multitude.

But his satisfaction did not last for long, for he saw an object that caused him some annoyance. The great giant, who seemed to have not yet fully awakened from his morning nap, came staggering across the bridge, causing great chaos. As usual he had risen still drowsy and intended to bathe in the familiar cove of the river. Instead of that he found dry land and groped along the broad pavement of the bridge.

Even though from the first he trod clumsily among the people and animals, his presence was to be sure astonishing to those about him, but as yet unfelt. When, however, the sun shone into his eyes and he raised his hands to rub them, the shadow of his monstrous fists behind him flew back and forth among the crowd so powerfully and clumsily, that people and animals collapsed together in great masses, were injured, and were in danger of being hurled into the river.

The king, when he saw this outrage, involuntarily reached toward his sword, but he reflected, and looked quietly first at his scepter, then at the lamp and the oar held by his companions. "I can guess your thoughts," said the man with the lamp, "but we and our forces are powerless against this powerless one. Be calm! He is doing harm for the last time, and fortunately his shadow is turned away from us."

Meanwhile the giant had come nearer and nearer; in amazement at what he saw with his own eyes, he let his hands drop, did no more harm, and entered the forecourt gaping.

He was heading straight for the door of the temple, when he was suddenly stuck fast to the ground in the middle of the courtyard. He stood there as a colossal, mighty statue of ruddy shining stone, and his shadow told the hours inlaid on a circle on the ground, not as numbers, but as noble and significant images.

The king was not a little pleased to see the monster's shadow turned to a useful purpose; the queen was not a little amazed when, ascending from the altar with her handmaidens, dressed with great magnificence, she glimpsed the strange image that almost completely obscured the view from temple to bridge.

Meanwhile, the people had come crowding after the giant, now that he stood still; they surrounded him and marveled at his transformation. From there the crowds turned toward the temple, which they seemed only now to perceive, and thronged to the door.

At that moment the hawk hovered with the mirror high above the dome, caught the light of the sun in it and shed it upon the group standing on the altar. The king, queen, and their companions appeared in the twilight vault of the temple illuminated by a heavenly radiance, and the people prostrated themselves. By the time they had recovered and risen to their feet, the king and his followers had descended into the altar to make their way by hidden passageways to his palace, and the people dispersed through the temple to satisfy their curiosity. They gazed at the three standing kings with amazement and reverence, but were even more curious to know what sort of lump might be hidden beneath the carpet in the fourth niche; for, whoever might have done it, well-meaning modesty had spread over the collapsed king a magnificent covering that no eye could penetrate and no hand dared remove.

The people would never have tired of looking and marveling, and the advancing crowds would have crushed one another to death inside the temple, had their attention not again been drawn back to the great court.

Unexpectedly gold coins were falling, as if from the air, ringing on the marble pavement; the closest travelers rushed to seize them. This miracle was repeated intermittently, now here, now there. It is easy to conceive that the departing will-o'-the-wisps were at it again and merrily squandering the gold from the limbs of the collapsed king. Greedily people continued to run about for a while, jostling and fretting even when the gold coins stopped falling. At last they gradually dispersed, set out on their journeys, and to this day the bridge teems with travelers, and the temple is the most frequented in the entire world.

N o v e l l a

At daybreak a thick autumn mist still flooded the spacious inner court of the Prince's castle; but when the veil gradually lifted, the hustle and bustle of the hunting party, on horseback and on foot, became more or less visible. The hurried preparations of those nearest at hand could be recognized: stirrups were lengthened or shortened, rifles and cartridge pouches passed around, knapsacks of badger skin adjusted, while the impatient hounds almost pulled their keepers along by their leashes. Here and there a horse pranced nervously, pricked by its own fiery temper or by the spur of its rider who, even in the dim light of the early morning, could not suppress a certain vanity to show off. All, however, were waiting for the Prince, whose farewells to his young wife had already caused too much delay.

Although those two had been married for only a short time, they already felt deeply the happiness of harmonious

minds; both had active and lively dispositions and each enjoyed sharing the other's tastes and pursuits. The Prince's father had lived long enough to see, and to put to good use, the day when it became clear that all the members of a state should spend their lives in the same industrious way; that everyone should work and produce according to his faculties, should first earn and then enjoy his living.

How successful this policy had been became evident during these days when the great market was held, which might well be called a trade fair. The day before, the Prince had escorted his wife on horseback through the maze of piled-up merchandise and had drawn her attention to the favorable exchange of products here between the mountainous regions and the plain; he was able to demonstrate to her, at this very center, the industry of his own domain.

Although the Prince's conversation with his entourage had turned, during these days, almost exclusively upon these pressing topics, and although he was constantly conferring, in particular, with his Minister of Finance, yet the Master of the Hounds also carried his point when he made the tempting suggestion, impossible to resist, that he arrange a hunt—already once postponed—during these favorable autumn days, to give friends and the many guests, lately arrived, a special and rare treat.

The Princess was not very happy to be left behind; but the plan was to penetrate far into the mountains in order to harass the peaceful inhabitants of those forests by an unexpected invasion.

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The Prince, at the moment of departure, did not forget to suggest that she should take a leisurely ride in the company of Prince Friedrich, his uncle. "And then," he added, "I also leave with you our Honorio as equerry and personal attendant. He will take care of everything." After saying these words he gave, on his way downstairs, the necessary instructions to a handsome young man; and then rode off with his guests and his attendants.

The Princess, after having waved her handkerchief to her husband in the courtyard below, went to the rooms on the other side of the castle, from which she had a clear view of the mountains—a view all the more beautiful since the rather elevated position of the castle above the river offered a variety of remarkable prospects on either side. She found the excellent telescope still in the position in which it had been left the evening before, when they had talked about the lofty ruins of the old family castle which could be seen over bush, mountain and wooded summit, and which had stood out unusually clear in the evening glow, the great masses of light and shade throwing into sharp relief this mighty monument of times long past. Now, in the early-morning light, the autumn colors of the various kinds of trees which had soared up unchecked and undisturbed through the masonry for so many years were startlingly distinct through the strong lenses which brought everything closer to the eye. The lovely lady, however, lowered the telescope slightly toward a barren stony tract where the hunting party would pass; she waited patiently for that moment and was not disappointed:

because of the clarity and magnifying power of the instrument, her bright eyes clearly recognized the Prince and the Grand Master of the Horse. She could not resist waving her handkerchief again when she more imagined than saw that they briefly halted and looked back.

At this moment Friedrich, the Prince's uncle, was announced. He entered the room with his draftsman who carried under his arm a large portfolio. "My dear niece," said the still-vigorous old gentleman, "we want to show you the drawings of the old castle, which have been made to demonstrate from various angles how remarkably well the powerful structure, built for shelter and defense, has resisted all seasons and all weathers from time immemorial, and how its masonry, nevertheless, has had to give way, here and there collapsing into desolate ruins. We have already taken steps to make this wilderness more accessible, for it is all that is needed to surprise and delight any wanderer or visitor."

After having explained to her in detail each single drawing, the old Prince continued: "Here, as we ascend through the hollow path in the outer ring of walls, we come to the castle itself, where a rock rises before us—one of the most massive rocks in the whole mountain range. Upon it a watchtower was built; but nobody would be able to say where nature ends and art and workmanship begin. Walls are annexed on both sides, and outworks slope downward in terraces. But this is not quite accurate, for it is actually a forest which girds this age-old summit. For the last hundred and fifty years no stroke of an ax has rung out here, and every-

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where gigantic trees have grown to a great height. When you push your way along the walls, the smooth maple, the sturdy oak and the slender fir tree obstruct your progress with their trunks and roots, and you have to wind your way around them and choose your footing with caution. Look, how admirably has our masterly artist shown, in his drawing, these characteristic features; how clearly you can recognize the various kinds of trunk and root interwoven with the masonry, and the strong branches interlaced through the gaps in the walls. This wilderness has no parallel; it is a unique place, where ancient traces of long-vanished human strength can be seen in a deadly struggle with the everlasting and ever-acting forces of nature."

Taking up another drawing, he went on: "And what do you think of this courtyard, which became inaccessible after the collapse of the old gate tower and has never been entered by any human being for countless years! We tried to force an entrance from one side; we broke through walls, blasted vaults, and in this way made a convenient but secret passage. We did not have to clear up the inner court which is paved by a flat-topped rock made smooth by nature; but, even so, here and there huge trees have succeeded in anchoring their roots; they have grown up slowly but resolutely and are now thrusting their branches right up into the galleries where, once upon a time, knights paced up and down; they have become the true Lords and Masters, and Lords and Masters they may remain. After removing deep layers of dead leaves we discovered the most extraordinary level place, the like of

which will probably not be found again in the whole world.

"We should, therefore, be grateful to our fine artist, whose various drawings have so convincingly reproduced the scene that we can imagine ourselves present. He has spent the best hours of the day and of the season on his work, and has studied these objects for weeks on end. On this corner we have arranged a small and pleasant lodging for him and the caretaker whom we have assigned to him. You cannot imagine, my dear, what a beautiful outlook and view into the open country and also toward the courtyard and ruins he can enjoy from there. But now, after sketching everything so neatly and faithfully, he will carry out his work down here at his convenience. We plan to decorate our garden room with these pictures, and no one will let his eyes wander over our symmetrically designed flowerbeds, our arbors and shady walks, without wishing to meditate in the castle itself, seeing both old things and new, that which is solid, inflexible and indestructible, and that which is vigorous, flexible and unresisting."

When Honorio entered and announced that the horses were ready, the Princess turned to her uncle and said: "Let us ride up there so that I can actually see everything you have shown me in these drawings. I have heard about that project ever since I came here; and now I feel a great desire to see with my own eyes what seemed to me impossible when described to me, and still unbelievable even after seeing the drawings."

"Not yet, my dear," replied the old Prince. "What you

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have just seen is what it can and will be. At present some of the work has come to a standstill. Art must first complete its task, if it is not to be put to shame by nature."

"Then we'll at least ride in that direction, even if only to the foot of the crag. Today I am very much in the mood for having a look around far and wide."

"Just as you wish," answered the old Prince.

"But I should love to ride through the town," added the Princess, "across the great market place where all those booths give the illusion of a small town or a tented encampment. It is as though the needs and occupations of all the families round about were gathered at this central point and laid out to be seen in broad daylight; for the watchful observer can see here everything man produces and needs, and one can imagine for a moment that money is unnecessary, that any business can be transacted here by barter, which is also fundamentally true. After the Prince gave me an opportunity for this observation yesterday, I am pleased at the thought that in this place, where mountains border the plains, the people of both regions so clearly express what they need and want. Because the mountain dweller knows how to shape the wood of his forests into a hundred forms, and how to convert iron to any purpose, the plainsman comes here to meet him with goods of such great variety that one can often hardly recognize their material, nor guess the purpose they may serve."

"I know that my nephew takes a great interest in these matters," said the old Prince, "and just at this time of year it

is most important to receive more than to spend; to accomplish this purpose is, ultimately, the sum of our whole state economy as well as of the smallest household budget. But forgive me, my dear, I never like to ride across a market place when a fair is going on; at every step obstacles block your way and stop you, and on such an occasion my imagination becomes kindled once more by the memory of that dreadful disaster which is branded, as it were, upon my eyes, when I saw similar piles of goods and merchandise go up in flames. I had scarcely—”

“Let us not waste these lovely morning hours,” the Princess interrupted him, for the old gentleman had several times before frightened her by describing that catastrophe in detail, telling her how once, on a long journey, he had stopped at the best inn on a market place which was on that day packed with the commotion of a fair; how he had, in the evening, gone to bed, extremely tired, and had been roused during the night in a ghastly manner by screams and by flames that were rolling against his lodging.

The Princess hurried downstairs and mounted her favorite horse, but, instead of leaving through the back gate and riding uphill, she led her reluctantly willing companion through the front gate and downhill; for who would not be delighted to ride by her side, who would not have willingly followed her? Even Honorio, who had been looking forward to joining the hunters, had willingly stayed behind to devote himself entirely to her service.

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As was to be expected, they could ride only step by step in the market place; but the lovely, gracious Princess cheered her companions with intelligent remarks whenever they were delayed. "I repeat my lesson of yesterday, for it is necessity that wishes to test our patience." And this was true, for the whole crowd pressed the riders so closely that they could move on only very slowly. The people were happy to catch a glimpse of the young lady, and many smiling faces showed definite pleasure in discovering that the first lady in the land was also the most beautiful and the most charming. There were mountain people, having come down from their quiet homes among rocks, firs and pines, and mixing with the plains people, who lived among hills, field and meadows; also tradespeople from small towns, and others who had assembled here. After having quietly surveyed the crowd, the Princess remarked to her companion how all these people, wherever they came from, used for their clothing more material than was necessary, more cloth and linen, more ribbon for trimming. "It seems to me that the women cannot pad themselves enough, nor the men puff themselves out enough to their satisfaction."

"And we won't begrudge them that pleasure," said the old gentleman. "People are happy, happiest indeed, when they can spend their surplus money on dressing themselves up and decking themselves out." The lovely lady nodded in agreement.

They had gradually advanced in this manner toward an

open square near the outskirts of the town, where they saw at the far end of a row of small booths and stalls a much larger wooden structure. Hardly had they sighted it when a deafening roar struck their ears. The feeding time for the wild animals on display there had evidently come; the lion raised his powerful forest-and-desert voice; the horses trembled; and one could hardly fail to realize the terrifying manner in which the King of the Desert announced his presence in the midst of the peaceful existence and pursuits of the civilized world. As they approached the building they could not help but see the huge, garish posters which represented in strong colors and striking images those strange animals and were meant to fill the peaceable citizen with an irresistible desire to see the show. A fierce, formidable tiger was seen attacking a blackamoor, about to tear him to pieces; a gravely majestic lion did not seem to see any prey worthy of his dignity; beside these mighty beasts, other strange and colorful creatures deserved less attention.

"On our way back," said the Princess, "let's dismount and have a closer look at these unusual guests."

"It is quite remarkable that human beings always want to be excited by something horrifying," said the old Prince. "In there, the tiger lies quietly in his cage, while out here he must make a furious leap on the blackamoor to make you believe that you will see him do the same within. As if there were not enough murder and bloodshed, fire and destruction in the world! The ballad singers have to repeat all this at every street corner. The good people want to be intimidated, so

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that they can afterwards feel, all the more intensely, how pleasant and relaxing it is to breathe freely."

Whatever uneasy feelings those alarming pictures may have given them, these were at once blotted out when they passed through the town gate into a perfectly serene countryside. They rode at first along the river, which was here still a rivulet, fit only for the traffic of small craft, but which farther on gradually widened to become one of the largest streams, retaining its name and bringing prosperity to distant countries. The gently rising road then led them through well-tended fruit and pleasure gardens, until a densely populated region gradually opened before them where, after having passed first a thicket and then a grove, charming villages limited but refreshed their view. A green valley, leading uphill, was a welcome change for the riders, as the grass had been lately mown for the second time, making the turf look like velvet; it was watered by a lively spring which came gushing down from some higher place. They now rode on to a higher and more open viewpoint which they reached, coming out of a wood, after a brisk ascent. It was then that they saw, though still at a considerable distance and over other groups of trees, the object of their pilgrimage—the old castle, rising aloft like the peak of some wooded crag. But when they turned around—and nobody arrived at this point without looking back—they saw to the left, through occasional gaps in the tall trees, the Prince's new castle, illuminated by the morning sun, the well-built upper part of the town, slightly obscured by light clouds of smoke, and farther to the right

the lower town, the river with some of its windings, its meadowlands and gristmills, while straight before them extended a wide, fertile region.

After they had feasted their eyes on the beautiful panorama, or rather, as usually happens when we look about us from such a height, were feeling a strong desire for an even wider and unbounded view, they rode uphill on a broad and stony tract, with the mighty ruin facing them like a green-crested pinnacle with only a few old trees deep down at its foot. Riding through these trees, they found themselves confronted with the steepest, most inaccessible flank where enormous, age-old rocks, untouched by change, massive and firm, towered above. Between them huge stone slabs and fragments, tumbled down in the course of time, were lying across each other in confusion and seemed to forbid even the boldest climber to advance. But anything precipitous and abrupt seems to appeal to youth. To dare, to attack, to conquer is a delight for young limbs. The Princess indicated that she would like to make the attempt; Honorio was at hand, and the old gentleman, though not so enterprising, did not protest, being reluctant to confess to lesser energy. They decided to leave the horses below under the trees and to try and reach a certain point where an enormous projecting rock presented a level space from which they would have a view, almost a bird's-eye view, of scenery still picturesque, though slowly receding into the distance.

The sun, almost at its highest point, shed a brilliant light on everything: the new castle with its various parts, the main

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buildings, the wings, cupolas and towers looked very impressive. The upper part of the town could be seen in its full extent; they could even easily look into the lower town and, through the telescope, recognize the different stalls in the market place. It was Honorio's habit to carry this useful instrument with him, strapped over his shoulder. They looked up and down the river, where the land on this side was broken by mountainous terraces; on the other side was an undulating, fertile plain, alternating with moderate hills and innumerable villages—it was an old custom to argue how many could be counted from this spot.

Over this vast expanse reigned a serene stillness, as is usual at noon when Pan is sleeping, as the ancients said, and all nature is holding its breath for fear of waking him.

"It is not for the first time," said the Princess, "that, standing on such a high place with a view in all directions, I have thought how pure and peaceful nature looks on a clear day, giving the impression that there could be nothing unpleasant in the world; but when we return into the habitations of human beings, be they high or low, large or small—there is always something to fight over, to dispute, to straighten out and set right."

Honorio, who had meanwhile been looking across at the town through the telescope, suddenly exclaimed: "Look! Look! A fire has started in the market place!" The others also looked and noticed some smoke, but the sunlight subdued the flames. "The fire is spreading!" all cried, looking by turns through the lenses; the good eyes of the Princess could

now recognize the disaster even without the help of the instrument. Now and then they could perceive red tongues of flames; smoke rose up, and the old Prince suggested: "Let's ride back, this is bad; I have always been afraid that I might have this unfortunate experience a second time." When they had climbed down and had reached their horses, the Princess turned to her uncle. "Please, ride back quickly, and take your groom with you. Leave Honorio with me; we'll follow at once." Her uncle, feeling that her suggestion was as reasonable as it was necessary, rode down the rough, stony slope as quickly as the condition of the ground allowed.

When the Princess had mounted her horse, Honorio said: "I implore Your Highness to ride slowly! Both in the town and at the castle everything for fighting fires is in the best order and nobody will lose his head in such an unusual and unexpected emergency. But the road here is bad, small stones and short grass, to ride fast is unsafe; in any case, the fire will certainly have been put out by the time we arrive." The Princess did not believe this. She saw the smoke spreading; she thought she saw a blazing flame and heard an explosion; and now all the terrifying scenes of the fire at the fair, witnessed by her uncle and described to her repeatedly, were evoked in her imagination on which they were unfortunately impressed all too deeply.

That former incident had been terrible, unexpected and shocking enough to leave behind a lifelong impression as well as an anxious apprehension of a possible recurrence of that kind of disaster. In the dead of night a sudden blaze had

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seized stall after stall on the great crowded market place, even before the people who were sleeping in or near those flimsy booths had been shaken from their dreams. The old Prince, a stranger, tired after a long journey, had retired early but, wakened from his first sleep, he had rushed to the window to see the ghastly illumination, flame upon flame, darting on every side and licking fiery tongues toward him. The houses on the market place, tinted red by the reflection, seemed to glow, threatening to catch fire at any moment and to burst into flames; below, the irresistible element kept raging, the boards crashed to the ground, laths cracked, pieces of tent canvas flew up, and the tatters, blackened and with jagged and flaming edges, reeled in the air, as if evil spirits, shaped and reshaped by their element, would consume themselves in a playful round dance, trying to emerge now and then out of the flames. Meanwhile, with piercing screams, people were saving whatever they could take hold of; servants and hired men helped their masters to drag to safety bales of goods already on fire, to snatch at least something from the racks and stuff it into the crates, although they were forced in the end to abandon everything to the destruction of the swiftly advancing flames. How many, wishing that the roaring fire would stop for a moment, had looked around for a possible breathing space and been seized by the flames with all their possessions. Everything that smoldered or was burning on the one side lay on the other still in deep darkness. Determined characters, men with a strong will, fiercely fought their fiery adversary and saved a

few things, though they lost their hair and their eyebrows. It was unfortunate that the wild confusion of that past event was now evoked again in the pure mind of the Princess. The serene horizon of the morning seemed suddenly clouded, her eyes dimmed, and even wood and meadow took on a strangely ominous look.

Riding into the peaceful valley, but oblivious to its refreshing coolness, they had hardly passed the lively source of the stream, flowing nearby, when the Princess caught sight of something unusual far below in the bushes of the meadowland, which she at once recognized as the tiger; leaping, it came up toward them, just as she had seen it on the poster a short time ago, and its sudden appearance, adding to the terrifying scenes which occupied her mind at this moment, affected her very strongly. "Flee, Madam!" shouted Honorio, "flee at once!" She turned her horse and rode up the steep hill from which they had just descended. But the young man rode toward the beast, drew his pistol and, when he thought he was within range, fired; but, unfortunately, he missed his mark. The tiger jumped aside, Honorio's horse shied, and the enraged animal continued on its way upward, closely following the Princess. She raced her horse as fast as it would go up the steep and stony slope, forgetting for the moment that the gentle creature, unaccustomed to such efforts, might not stand the strain. Urged on by its hard-pressed rider, the horse overtaxed itself, stumbled now and then over the loose stones of the slope and, after one last violent effort, fell exhausted to the ground. The lovely lady, res-

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olute and expert, managed to get quickly to her feet; the horse, too, scrambled up, but the tiger was coming nearer, although at a slower pace; the rough ground and the sharp stones seemed to check its progress, and only the fact that Honorio was in close pursuit appeared to irritate and goad it on again. Racing toward the place where the Princess was standing beside her horse, both runners arrived at the same time. The chivalrous young man leaned from his horse, fired his second pistol, and shot the beast through the head. The tiger fell at once and, stretched out at full length, showed more clearly than ever its tremendous power, the physical frame of which was now all that was left. Honorio had jumped from his horse and knelt on the animal, stifling any last sign of life, his drawn hunting knife ready in his right hand. He was a handsome youth whom the Princess had often before seen galloping his horse, as he had just now, at the tournaments. In the same way, while riding in the manège at a full gallop, his bullet had hit the Turk's head (mounted on a pole) right under the turban; and again, approaching at an easy gallop, he had speared the Moor's head from the ground with the point of his drawn sword. In all such arts he was skilled and lucky, and both skill and luck had now stood him in good stead.

"Give it the finishing stroke!" cried the Princess. "I'm afraid the beast may still hurt you with its claws."

"Excuse me, but it is already dead," the young man answered, "and I do not want to spoil its pelt which shall adorn your sledge next winter."

"Don't be frivolous at a moment like this, which calls forth all feelings of reverence in the depth of our hearts," said the Princess.

"I too have never in my life felt more reverence than at this moment," exclaimed Honorio, "but just for that reason I think of something cheerful and can look at this pelt only in the light of your future pleasure."

"It would always remind me of this dreadful moment," she replied.

"But isn't it a much more innocent trophy than the weapons of defeated enemies which used to be carried in the triumphal procession before a conqueror?" asked the young man with glowing cheeks.

"I shall always remember your courage and skill when I look at it; and I need not add that you can count on my gratitude and the Prince's favor as long as you live. But do stand up now! There is no longer any life in the beast, and we must think of what to do next. First of all, stand up!"

"Since I am already on my knees before you, in an attitude which would be forbidden to me in any other circumstances, I beg of you to give me at once a proof of the kindness and good will which you just promised me," said the young man. "I have asked your husband, the Prince, several times before to give me leave and the permission to go abroad. Any person who has the good fortune to sit at your table and have the privilege of your company should have seen the world. Persons who have traveled widely come here from all parts, and as soon as the conversation turns to a certain town or any

place of importance in some part of the world, we are asked if we have been there. No one who has not seen all these things is considered an educated person; it seems as if we should inform ourselves only for the benefit of others."

"Stand up!" the Princess said once more. "I do not like to ask my husband for anything that runs contrary to his opinions; but if I am not mistaken, the reason why he has kept you here until now will soon be removed. His intention was to see you matured into an independent nobleman who would do credit both to himself and to his Prince when abroad as he did here; and I should think that your action today would be the best letter of recommendation a young man could carry with him into the world."

The Princess did not have time to notice that a shadow of sadness rather than youthful delight passed over Honorio's face; nor did he himself have time to give way to his feelings, for a woman, holding a boy by the hand, came running in great haste up to where they were standing; and hardly had Honorio collected himself and got up, when she flung herself, weeping and crying, on the lifeless body of the tiger. Her behavior as well as her picturesque and odd, though clean and decent, dress showed that she was the owner and keeper of the creature stretched on the ground. The dark-eyed boy with curly dark hair, holding a flute in his hand, knelt down beside his mother and also wept with deep feeling, although less violently.

This unhappy woman's wild outburst of passion was followed by a stream of words which, though incoherent and

fitful, flowed like a brook gushing from one rocky ledge to another. This natural language, short and abrupt, was most impressive and touching. As it would be impossible to try and translate her words into our idiom, we can give only an approximate meaning.

"They have murdered you, poor creature! murdered you needlessly! You were tame and would have loved to lie down quietly and wait for us, for your pads hurt you and your claws had no strength left. You missed the hot sun, which would have made them grow strong. You were the most beautiful of your kind; no man ever saw a royal tiger, so splendidly stretched out in sleep, as you lie now, dead, never to rise again! When, in the morning, you woke at daybreak, opened your jaws wide and put out your red tongue, you seemed to smile at us; and even though you roared, you still took your food playfully from the hands of a woman, from the fingers of a child! How long we traveled with you on your journeys; how long was your company important and rewarding to us! To us, yes, to us it came true: 'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.' All this is now over! Alas, alas!"

Her lament was not yet finished when riders came down the slope from the castle, galloping at full speed. They were soon recognized as the hunting party, headed by the Prince himself. While hunting in the mountains beyond, they had seen the smoke clouds rising from the fire and had taken a direct path toward these ominous signs, racing through valleys and gorges as if in eager pursuit of game. Galloping over

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the stony ground, they now stopped short and stared at the unexpected group, which stood out with remarkable distinctiveness on the level clearing. After the first recognition nobody spoke a word, and when everyone had somewhat recovered from the surprise, a few words were sufficient to explain what had not been obvious at a first glance. As he heard about the extraordinary and unheard-of occurrence, the Prince stood among his attendants on horseback and the men who had hurried after him on foot. There was no doubt about what to do; the Prince gave his orders and instructions, when suddenly a tall man forced his way into the circle. He was dressed in the same strange and colorful fashion as his wife and child. And now the whole family was united in mutual surprise and grief. The man, however, collected himself and, standing at a respectful distance from the Prince, said to him: "This is not a moment for lament. Oh, my lord and mighty hunter, the lion too is at large and has come to these hills, but spare him, have pity and let him not be killed like this good animal here."

"The lion?" said the Prince. "Have you found his tracks?"

"Yes, my lord! A peasant in the valley who needlessly took refuge in a tree directed me to go up this hill to the left; but when I saw the crowd of men and horses I hurried here, being curious and in need of help."

"Then the hunt must start in that direction," the Prince ordered. "Load your guns; go cautiously to work. It will do no harm if you drive the animal into the woods below; but in the end, my good man, we won't be able to spare your

favorite creature. Why have you been so careless as to let both animals escape?"

"The fire broke out," the man replied. "We kept quiet and waited to see what would happen. It spread very fast but was far away. We had enough water to protect ourselves, but some gunpowder exploded, and burning fragments were blown over to us and beyond. We left in haste and confusion and are now very unhappy people."

The Prince was still busy giving instructions, but for a moment everything seemed to come to a standstill, for a man was seen running down from the old castle—a man they soon recognized to be the castellan who was in charge of the painter's workroom where he lived, being also the supervisor of the workmen. He arrived out of breath, but quickly told his story in a few words: behind the upper rampart the lion had peacefully settled down in the sunshine, at the foot of a hundred-year-old beech tree. But the castellan angrily concluded: "Why did I take my gun to town yesterday to have it cleaned! If I had had it handy, the lion would not have stood up again; the skin would be mine, and I would have bragged about it all my life, and justly so!"

The Prince, whose military experience was now of value to him, for he had found himself before in situations where inevitable trouble had threatened from several sides, turned to the first man, saying: "What guarantees can you give me that your lion, should we spare him, will do no harm to my people in this region?"

"My wife and my child offer to tame him, and to keep him

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quiet until I have managed to bring up here the iron-barred cage in which we'll take him back again, harmless and unharmed," answered the father hastily.

The boy evidently wished to try out his flute, an instrument of the kind formerly called "flauto dolce," which had a short mouthpiece like a pipe. Those who know how to play it can produce the most pleasant sounds. Meanwhile, the Prince had asked the castellan how the lion had managed to enter the castle grounds. The man answered: "By the narrow passage which is walled in on both sides and has, for ages, been the only approach and is meant to remain so. Two footpaths, formerly leading up, have been so completely obstructed that, except by this narrow approach, no one can enter the magic castle which the mind and taste of Prince Friedrich intended it to become."

After some moments of reflection, watching the child who all the time had been playing softly his flute as if preluding, the Prince turned to Honorio, saying: "You have accomplished much today, finish now what you began. Take some men with you and hold the narrow passage, have your guns ready but do not shoot unless you cannot drive back the beast in any other manner. If necessary, build a fire to scare it if it should try to come down. This man and his wife may take responsibility for the rest." Honorio at once set about carrying out these orders.

The child went on playing his tune, which was actually only a sequence of notes without any precise order and perhaps for this very reason was so deeply moving. Those stand-

ing around seemed to be under the spell of the melodious rhythm, when the father of the boy began to speak with appropriate enthusiasm:

"God has given the Prince wisdom and also the knowledge that all the works of God are wise, each in its own way. Look at that rock, how firm it stands; it does not move and braves the storms and the sunshine. Ancient trees surround its summit, and proudly it looks around far and wide. If one of its parts should crumble, it does not want to remain where it was but falls down, shattered to pieces, and covers the side of the slope. But even there the pieces will not stay; playfully they leap into the depth below; the brook receives them and carries them to the river. Neither resisting nor obstinate and angular, but smooth and rounded, they move along with increasing speed and pass from river to river, till they finally reach the ocean, where a host of giants are marching and the deep is swarming with dwarfs.

"But who sings the glory of the Lord, whom the stars praise for ever and ever? And why do you look in distant places? Look at the bees! Late in the fall they are still harvesting and build themselves a house, true and level, at once masters and workmen. Watch the ants: they know their way and never lose it; they build themselves a home of grass, crumbs of earth and pine needles; they build it up and cover it with a vaulted roof; but they have worked in vain, for the horse paws the ground and destroys everything. Look! it crushes their rafters and scatters their planks; it snorts impatiently and is restless; for the Lord has made the horse a

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brother to the wind and a companion of the storms, to carry man wherever he wishes, and woman wherever she desires to go. But in the palm grove the lion appeared. At a dignified pace he crossed the desert, where he reigns over all the other animals and nothing withstands him. Yet man knows how to tame him, and the cruellest of creatures has respect for him, the image of God, in which the angels too are made who serve the Lord and His servants. For in the lion's den Daniel was not afraid; he stood firm and was confident, and the wild roaring did not interrupt his hymn of praise."

This speech, delivered with an expression of natural enthusiasm, the child accompanied with occasional melodious sounds on his flute; but when his father had finished, the boy began to sing in a clear, ringing voice, with skillful modulations, whereupon the father took the flute and accompanied the child, who sang:

From the deep and from the darkness
Rises now the prophet's song;
God and Angels hover round him—
 Why should he fear wrong?
Lion and lioness together
Rub against his knees and purr,
For that melting holy music
 Stills their savage stir.

The father continued to accompany each strophe on the flute, while the mother joined in, from time to time, as a second voice. But it was particularly moving when the child began to change the order of the lines of the verse; and even

though he did not give a new meaning to the whole, he intensified his own feeling and the feelings of the listeners.

Round the child those Angels hover
Guarding him with sacred song;
In the deep and in the darkness
Why should he fear wrong?
In the presence of that music
Never may misfortune dwell;
Round my path the Angels hover:
All things shall be well.

All three then sang together with force and exaltation:

For the Eternal rules the waters,
Rules the earth, the air, the fire;
Like a lamb the lion shall gambol
And the flood retire.
Lo! the naked sword of anger
Hangs arrested in midair:
Strong the Love and great its wonders
That abides in prayer.

All were silent; all heard and listened; and only when the sounds had died away could one notice and observe the general impression. Everyone seemed to have calmed down; everyone was touched in a different manner. The Prince, as if he only now realized the disaster which had threatened him a short time ago, looked down at his wife, who was leaning against him and was not ashamed to take her small embroidered handkerchief and press it to her eyes. It did her good to feel her youthful heart relieved of the oppression that

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had weighed on it during the last hour. Complete silence reigned in the crowd; all seemed to have forgotten the dangers around them: the fire in the town below and, from above, the possible appearance of a suspiciously quiet lion.

The Prince was the first to get the crowd moving again when he gave the order to lead the horses nearer. Then he turned to the woman and said: "Do you really believe that you can attract and tame the escaped lion, wherever you find him, by your singing and the sounds of your child's flute, and that you can take him back under lock and key without harm to others and to the beast itself?" They assured him that they could certainly do this, whereupon the castellan was appointed to be their guide. The Prince now left hurriedly with a few of his men, while the Princess followed more slowly with the others; but the mother and her son, accompanied by the castellan, who had meanwhile armed himself with a gun, climbed up the steep slope.

At the entrance to the narrow passage, the only approach to the old castle, they found the huntsmen busily piling up dry brushwood to build, if necessary, a large fire.

"It will not be necessary," said the woman. "Everything will be done in a friendly manner."

Farther on they saw Honorio sitting on a spur of the wall, his double-barreled gun across his knees, like a sentry prepared for anything that might happen. But he hardly seemed to notice them as they approached. He sat there as if sunk deep in thoughts and looked around in an absent-minded way. The woman spoke to him, imploring him not to let his

men light the fire, but he seemed to give little attention to what she said; she went on to speak with great animation and exclaimed: "Handsome young man, you killed my tiger—I do not curse you. Spare my lion, good young man, and I shall bless you."

But Honorio looked straight ahead at the sun, which was slowly going down.

"You look westward," the woman cried, "and that is well, for there is much to be done there. But hurry, do not delay! You will conquer. But first conquer yourself!" At this, Honorio seemed to smile; the woman continued on her way but could not refrain from looking back once more at the young man; the red glow of the sun flushed his face, and she thought she had never seen a more handsome youth.

"If your child," said the castellan, "can really charm and quiet the lion with his song and his flute, as you are convinced he can, we shall quite easily subdue the powerful beast, for it has settled down quite close to the vaults through which we have broken an entrance into the courtyard, since the main gate has been blocked up by ruins. If the child can lure the lion in there, I can close the opening without any difficulty, and the boy can, if he wants, escape from the animal over one of the narrow winding stairs which he can see in the corners. We two are going to hide; but I shall take up a position from where my bullet can come to the child's aid at any moment."

"All these preparations are unnecessary. God and our own skill, faith and good fortune are our best aides."

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"That may be so," said the castellan, "but I know my duty. First I shall lead you by a difficult ascent up to the battlements just opposite the entrance I mentioned before. Your child may descend then, as it were, into the arena of a theater and lure the trusting beast into it."

And so it happened: from their hiding place above, the castellan and the mother saw the child walking down the winding stairs into the bright courtyard, and then disappearing into the dark opening opposite; but they could immediately hear the sounds of his flute which gradually died away and finally stopped. The silence was ominous enough; the old hunter, though familiar with danger, felt ill at ease in this strange case concerning a human being. He thought to himself that he would prefer to face the dangerous animal himself; the mother, however, with a cheerful face, leaned far over the parapet and listened, not showing the slightest sign of uneasiness.

At last they heard the flute again; with eyes radiant with joy the child came out of the dark vault, the lion following him slowly and apparently walking with some difficulty. Now and then the animal seemed inclined to lie down, but the boy led it around in a half circle among the trees, which still showed some of their bright autumn foliage. Finally he sat down, almost transfigured by the last rays of the sun shining through a gap in the ruins, and began once more his soothing song, which we cannot refrain from repeating:

From the deep and from the darkness
Rises now the prophet's song;

God and Angels hover round him—

Why should he fear wrong?

Lion and lioness together

Rub against his knees and purr,

For that melting holy music

Stills their savage stir.

The lion had meanwhile nestled close to him, placing his heavy right forepaw in the lap of the boy, who, continuing to sing, stroked it gently but soon noticed that a sharp thorn was stuck between the pads. Carefully removing the painful point, the boy took off his bright-colored scarf with a smile and bandaged the fearful paw, so that his mother, leaning back, flung up her arms in delight and would probably have applauded—clapping her hands in the usual manner—had not a firm grip of the castellan's fist reminded her that the danger was not yet over.

After playing a few notes on the flute as a prelude, the child sang triumphantly:

For the Eternal rules the waters,

Rules the earth, the air, the fire;

Like a lamb the lion shall gambol

And the flood retire.

Lo! the naked sword of anger

Hangs arrested in midair:

Strong the Love and great its wonders

That abides in prayer.

If it is possible to believe that an expression of friendliness, of grateful satisfaction, can be perceived on the features of

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such a fierce creature, the tyrant of the forests, the despot of the animal kingdom, then here it was seen; for the child, in his transfiguration, seemed really like a powerful and victorious conqueror, and the lion, though not looking like a defeated being, for his strength was only for a time concealed, did yet seem a tamed being, having surrendered to his own peaceable will. The child went on playing the flute and singing, transposing the verses and adding new ones in his own way:

So good children find the Angels
Near them in their hour of need,
To prevent designing evil
And promote the shining deed.
So the dear child walks in safety,
For the notes, bewitching sweet,
Bring the tyrant of the forest
Gentle to his gentle feet.